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The School to Prison Pipeline and the Voices of Formerly Incarcerated African American Males

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The School to Prison Pipeline and the Voices of Formerly Incarcerated African American Males

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The School to Prison Pipeline and the Voices of Formerly Incarcerated African American Males

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The school to prison pipeline is a phrase used to describe the phenomenon where youth, and disproportionately African American males, are pushed out of public school systems into criminal justice systems. It hints at the possibility that incarceration is not a matter of chance, but often a structurally created and supported outcome. In order to understand the men most disproportionately impacted by the phenomena this study explores the narratives of twelve formerly incarcerated African American men. Structural racism, challenges of school integrations and criminal justice policies emerge as powerful influences on the life outcomes of formerly incarcerated African American men. This study goes beyond statistical accounts of racial disproportionality in the criminal justice system to deeply consider the voices of generations of formerly incarcerated African American men. Understanding the impact of the school and justice systems on the lives of African American men has implications for educators and policy makers.

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Chapter One: Introduction

A growing body of research suggests that a series of policies and practices have created circumstances that predictably, if not systematically, funnel millions of students from school into the juvenile justice system. The phrase that has emerged to describe the phenomenon is the school to prison pipeline (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Edelman, 2008; Tuzzolo, 2006; Wald & Losen, 2003; Browne, 2003). This study explores aspects of the construction, maintenance, and human dimensions of the pipeline.

This study specifically explores the circumstances of African American males, the group that by proportion is most impacted by the pipeline phenomenon. My research explores the life histories of twelve formerly incarcerated African American males and in so doing fill a significant gap in a body of literature that focuses on crime rates and statistics without considering the conditions that give rise to African American incarceration and without incorporating the voices and perspectives of the formerly incarcerated African American men themselves.

African American criminalization is not a new reality. In 1790, Pennsylvania's first correctional facilities' inmate was a "light skinned negro" (Mauer, 2006). Today, federal and state agencies arrest and incarceration rates reports attest to the gross overrepresentation of African Americans in the criminal justice system. In 2009, African American adults accounted for 13 percent of the U.S. population and 56.7 percent of all arrests (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009; Uniform Crime Reports, 2008). Moreover, the racial

disparities hold across genders. In the United States, African American women account for 7 percent of the population, but 40 percent of all the arrests of women.

Racial disparities exist in the juvenile justice system as well. In the area of criminal justice, we have lost our capacity to or interest in differentiating between youth and adults as we incarcerate the nation's children at the same rate that we are incarcerating adults. The impact is disproportionately felt by African American youth. According to the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice Programs, in 2008, juveniles accounted for 2.1 million of the arrests made by law enforcement. Of these, 58.5% were arrests of African Americans (Puzzanchera, 2009). In a Texas study of the juvenile justice system, 23 percent of the students involved in school disciplinary referrals were also referred to the juvenile justice system; 47 percent were African American (Carmichael et al, 2005).

For more than a century scholars have grappled with possible explanations for the criminalization of African American males (DuBois, 1898; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011). Anecdotal evidence might suggest that African American males are committing more crime due to such commonly noted factors as poverty, family structures, and neighborhood and peer influences. However, this line of reasoning is not supported by the data regarding crime rates, European American males commit crimes at the same rate (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999 & 2008). Similarly, school discipline data regarding the suspensions and expulsions of African Americans seems to suggest that African Americans engage in more egregious inappropriate behaviors, and that they do so more frequently than their peers. However, several careful researchers

have noted that after controlling for behavior, socioeconomics, and gender − race emerges as a critical factor in school discipline (Skiba et al, 2011; Skiba et al, 2009, Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Rocque, 2010)

Even as they note racial disparities however, many scholars who consider African American offending and incarceration focus primarily on the individual offender as opposed to the system that has produced the racial disparities (Rocque, 2010; Kupchik, 2010; Skiba, 2000). In doing so, they neglect the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, the United States' first scholar of African American criminology. As early as 1899 Du Bois noted racial discrimination as it relates to African American offending; few have picked up and developed his insights. When studied, racial discrimination and racial disparities in schools appears rampant but few scholars have approached the topic and connected it to African American incarceration rates. While the first report dealing with questions of racial disparity in juvenile justice was published in 1975 (Children Defense Fund, 1975) the questions remained largely ignored until the 1980's and 1990's (Wu, 1982). In the 1990's, when racial disparities became paramount, Russell (1992) encouraged researchers to focus on how African Americans internalized racial terror and mistreatment and how it relates to offending patterns. Russell further (1992) suggested that researchers should operationalize and test perceived racism. While this research was laudable, the focus remained on the individual and not the system of racism that Du Bois noted in 1899.

Crime has historically been associated with acts that take place outside of school (i.e. robbery, murder, etc.). While transgressive acts by youth within the school are more

likely associated with misbehavior punishable without referring to the criminal justice system, but we have moved the notion of crime into the patterns of practice including punishment in our schools. Our nation's angst around school violence primed the political arena for reactionary policies that ultimately criminalized students and schools. Even as the most egregious and discussed incidents of school violence involved European American males, African American males have suffered disproportionately from school discipline polices. For many African American males, school has become a space of prison preparation instead of academic aspirations.

Zero tolerance policies were initially enacted to provide safer school environments. State mandated referrals to disciplinary alternative education programs for juveniles with criminal behaviors deemed severe (such as fighting or possession of drugs and/or weapons) are intended to allow law-abiding students the freedom to learn in a context of safety. However, within the laws school personnel have been granted the power to make discretionary referrals to alternative education programs. In an era of fear-driven zero tolerance for misbehavior (Kupchik, 2010), talking back to teachers, profanity, or disrupting class all qualified as violations of local policy codes of conduct. Over the past 10 years, discretionary referrals have accounted for more and more disciplinary referrals. Meanwhile state-mandated referrals for serious offenses have constituted a small and decreasing percentage of disciplinary referrals. The terrain has shifted toward criminalizing a broader range of behaviors (Appleseed, 2007& 2009; Justice Center, 2011). Public schools' adoption of zero tolerance policies in the late 1980's and early 1990's ushered in police departments and metal detectors on public

school campuses, random locker searches, increased disciplinary referrals, and lock downs (Farmer, 2010).

Opponents of zero tolerance have suggested criminalization theories as a method of garnering support against zero tolerance policies. I argue that criminalization is part of a larger system of racism that is too seldom studied, much less acknowledged. Critical thought about the racially disparate harm of policies that criminalize misbehaviors of students invite the possibility that more researchers should pay attention to race and racial harm as they analyze policy making, teaching, and school discipline. Our so called "race-neutral" and "colorblind" policies and practice bind racism to our institutions and secure European American or White superiority by ignoring bias (McGew, 2008; Marx, 2006).

The notion of colorblindness begins in our justice system with scholars and professionals suggesting that the constitution is colorblind. Justice Harlan in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) said, "Our constitution is colorblind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens" (Bell, 2004; Brown et al, 2003). The judge ignored the fugitive slave laws and 3/5 compromise. Such colorblind talk historically and currently encourages European Americans to evade conversations regarding race (Marx, 2006). School polices and practices are notorious for avoiding the recognition of racist acts and speech against students of color when they occur (Pollock, 2010). Statements like "all children are the same and I don't see color" are often uttered by school professionals (Marx, 2006; Banks & Banks, 2003); despite evidence to the contrary. This has implications, not only for educational attainment, but also for the likelihood of disciplining and eventual involvement in the criminal justice system. During researcher

Sherry Marx's time at a high school, an African American boy was suspended for wearing dreadlocks, despite that length of his hair was within school guidelines. A question arises as to how often school decisions and reactions are informed by race.

The noble but misguided principle of colorblindness is equality through the refusal to recognize differences of circumstances and racial experience. This principle is rooted in the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education* that launched integration as a means to improve educational outcomes for African Americans (Browne, Losen & Wald, 2002; Skiba et al, 2011). The predominant methods for equalizing academic outcomes included closing or combining schools previously segregated, and resulted in the demotion or displacement of African American educational professionals. Desegregation routinely removed African American students from neighborhood schools and transported them to other areas in a given city. Black Schools had been sites for long-standing relationships with families and neighborhood institutions. Historically, longstanding culturally informed parent/ teacher relationships helped ensure the well being of individual students. In the African American community teachers had been equipped to help the students negotiate and achieve in the context of a racist society. With integration, black students were separated from schools and teachers who were engaged and committed to the local community and who understood the students and parents. While there are wonderful European American teachers, during integration and today it remains that European American teachers are less likely to be effective with black children (Hill, 2008). The process of "equalizing" after *Brown vs. Board of Education* essentially rooted out an African American educational philosophy

(Hillard, 1995) that had developed and "integrated" students into a space of Eurocentric educational philosophy. The implications of this range from the suppression of achievement to the greater likelihood of African American students imagined as criminal or deviant.

Purpose and Structure

My project seeks to better understand the school to prison pipeline through the lived experiences of twelve formerly incarcerated men ages 24-61 years old. My positionality and epistemology impacts the problem I seek to address in my research, and has helped me shape my theoretical framework, research questions, and methodology.

Position with Purpose

Hurtado (2003) states, "the reality is who researchers are and how they grow up is equally as important to what they choose to study and how" (p. 216). To understand the critical narratives of African American males I have to understand my own narrative and scholarly identity and its role in shaping my research. I was in some respects drawn to this area of research from birth. My family, education, and community have all shaped my research as well. I was born in 1972 to young parents in a close-knit community in Dallas, Texas. That same year my father was incarcerated. I grew up sheltered and protected by my mother, step-father, grand parents, and extended family. My father was virtually a stranger until my early twenties.

During my K-12 years, my schooling in predominately European American schools shaped much of my racial identity. For many years I was unaware of my "Blackness." While I can recall moments of discrimination in middle school, it was not

until high school that race became an acknowledged and salient variable in my life. I attended a performing arts high school that developed discipline, passion, and self-expression, and it was in this space that I discovered and took on a Black racial identity. My high school musical theatre teacher and mentor Nedra James encouraged me to visit historically black colleges and universities. The decision to attend Howard University would lead to my professionalization and ultimately shape the woman I would become. After receiving my bachelor degree I began working at a community college in California. This experience sparked my professional interest in juvenile incarceration and education. Many of the students at the college had been incarcerated during their teenage years. When I left California after 5 years and moved to Texas I became the executive director of a non-profit that served high school students. I established a relationship with a judge in Midland, Texas who helped me start a first-time offender program for students who had been charged with status offenses such as offenses typically associated with youth as truancy and possession of tobacco type. After 10 years of working with youth in both educational and non-profit environments I decided I needed to learn more to understand how to improve my effectiveness working with juvenile offenders.

As I entered graduate school in 2002, I wanted to understand more about the juvenile justice population. In 2008, I volunteered at the Texas Youth Commission. At the same time the agency was struggling to reform itself after devastating abuse allegations. I interviewed former offenders from around the state who were attempting to reconstruct their lives after incarceration. Thirty years having passed since my father and his best friend were incarcerated as teenagers, hearing the stories of these youth lead me

to wonder how I could tell their story. Essentially, the story of young men who had been filled with possibility, but were eventually lost to incarceration. I began to feel that understanding my father's story would enhance my capacity to understand and positively impact the current day juvenile justice issues. I began to talk with family and friends about the possibility of doing research so metaphorically and literally close to home. Despite my growing interest, I did not interview my father until 2010. I wanted to understand how he and his best friend's lived experiences mirrored and differed from those of juveniles presently. How would they describe their path to delinquent behavior, crime and prison? How did they navigate schooling and prison? In short, I arrive at this story and to the present research project as the daughter of man who was incarcerated, as a youth advocate who has been impacted by the resilience of youth, and as an emerging scholar who seeks to understand the school to prison discourse and consistent educational injustice.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I am interested in the ways in which the school to prison pipeline has influenced the educational and life trajectories of African American men. Due to the complexity and size of both the school systems and the correctional systems, my analyses are guiding by the conceptual frameworks of structural racism, over determinism, and a commitment to a community engaged approach to scholarship.

Structural Racism

Smith (2009) and Roithmayer (2008) discuss structural racism as a socio-legal theory that combines critical race theory and systems science. Critical race theory is the

legal theory that focuses on the "historical centrality and complicity of law in upholding White supremacy" (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Critical race theory recognizes the racial bias embedded in the American legal system, challenges the idea of a "colorblind" constitution, and challenges the idea that any legal doctrine is fair, objective, or neutral. In educational systems, critical race theory has been utilized by educational scholars to analyze the effects of racial injustice on students of color in schools (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The basic tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) focus on:

1. Racism as normal in American society and calls for strategies for exposing it in its various forms;

2. The significance of experiential knowledge and employing storytelling to "analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down" (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv);

3. Challenging traditional and dominant discourse and paradigms on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to affect people of color;

4. A commitment to social justice; and

5. The transdisciplinary perspective strategies for school achievement (Oyserman et al., 1995). CRT in education acknowledges the further intersectionality of race and racism and a commitment to social justice (Soloranzo, 1998).

Systems science or systems theory that illuminates complex social systems. Systems theory recognizes the interconnectedness of actions, people, and events that affect one another. This particular framework is critical to my project because often juveniles' entry into the juvenile justice system is complicated by their interaction with several different systems: family, school, neighborhood, peers, and media. While many scientific experiments suggest a single cause and effect however, systems theory acknowledges the dynamic nature of social systems in "which circumstances occur as a result of multiple causes" (Smith, 2009 p.1024). Further, systems theory examines macro and micro systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1971) and their cumulative impact across domains over time. This theory of development illuminates an interdependent strand of human experiences that is fluid and changing and that can be interwoven with the environment. Systems theory is defined as a group of related elements that interact as a whole entity, encompassing general systems theory and cybernetics (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004). Bronfenbrenner's model of systems components includes microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems proves especially appropriate for this analysis.

Microsystem is a complex relationship between a person and his or her environment. The immediate setting containing a person (e.g., home, school, workplace, etc.) is defined as a place with physical features where the participant engages in activities in particular roles (e.g., daughter, parent, student, employee, etc.) for a defined period of time.

Mesosystem is the relationship among the major settings that contain the person at a certain point in his or her life. Mesosystem is a subsystem of microsystem that

encompasses interaction during a particular age. For a 2 year old American child, his or her mesosystem typically includes family, school or daycare, peer group, and church.

Exosystem is a system that does not contain the person but impinges upon the immediate settings in which that person is found and, therefore, influences what goes on there. The system embraces both formal and informal social structures that include the world, agencies of government (local, state, and national) the neighborhood, and the media.

Macrosystem is the overarching institutional patterns of culture and subculture. Macrosystems are conceived and examined not only in structural terms but also as carriers of information and ideology that both define and imply meaning and motivation to agencies, social networks, roles, activities, and the interrelationship to one another. Macrosystems are informal and implicit, carried often unintentionally in the minds of society's members as ideology embodied in customs and practices in everyday life. Macrosystem is important because it determines how a child and his or her caregivers will interact with each other in different settings.

By integrating critical race and systems theory, the structural racism theory allows the researcher to explore the socio-historical and inter-institutional processes that lead to racial impact and harm (Smith, 2009). Structural racism analysis examines equality by highlighting the realities created in the varying systems both micro and macro. Further, systems theory supports the recognition of historical racial disparities and terrorism and its impact on current racial disparities across domains (Smith, 2009). The nature of current day racism may suggest a cadre of "unidentifiable" and "unintentional" racists

who dislike open and egregious acts of hatred based on race, but nonetheless participate in everyday actions that negatively impact particular racial groups. These subconscious or "dysconscious" (King, 1991) racists further cement the importance of structural racism approaches.

Contextual Interventions and Structural Transformations (Community Engaged Scholarship)

The theoretical framework of contextual interventions, structural intervention, and structural transformations captures a "continuum of agency and impact" (Foster, 2011 p. 19). The efforts that impact structures shape outcomes for people and systems. Contextual interventions are actions in a particular context that interrupt the status quo, but that have an impact that is limited to the immediate context and time. Structural Interventions challenge the status quo, but do not fundamentally alter institutional norms. Structural Transformation speaks to and alters the technologies of power that exist within institutions. Foster's framework is demonstrated through the applied community work of the Institute of Community, University, and School Partnership (ICUSP), a university-based community institute. The institute develops and implements programs for community youth, and partners with schools and community leaders to enhance the resources for underserved K-12 students and improve academic outcomes. Additionally, the institute is a conduit for community-engaged scholarship. Utilizing university faculty and students, school administrators and teachers, and community leaders, the center produces knowledge, attempts to move from the contextual responses to structural responses and structural transformation. Kraehe et al (2010) detail the ICUSP initiatives

that leverage the intellectual resources of educators, cultural workers and community leaders to combat challenges and systematically improve educational opportunities for middle and high school students**.** Kraehe et al. (2010) explains:

> "Contextually generated responses address a collectively identified problem or situation on a local level. They do not, however, fundamentally alter the structures that gave rise to the problem or situation in the first place or those that help preserve the status quo. As a result, while contextual responses can be intellectually and affectively liberating and empowering for individual students, families, or even communities, they are nonetheless limited in impact. They will eventually need to serve as no more or less than the bedrock, inspiration, and springboard for changes in policy or institutional practice that will sustain structurally transformative solutions" (p.244).

In one such contextual response, Ladson-Billings (2011) suggests teachers begin to restore African American boys' boyhood. Teachers must see African American boys as children versus imagining them as men. If we change how we imagine African American males we change how we educate them. If we educate differently we may incarcerate them less.

According to Grant (2011), African American males are taught utilizing a "racist, biased, and truncated" school curriculum (p.33). To address this challenge Banks (2001) suggests teachers must be culturally relevant or responsive and embrace social justice. Studies indicate that teachers build culturally competent classrooms by introducing local and contextually relevant non-mainstream curriculum; the thought is that learning must be relevant for students of all identities (Banks, 2001). For example at Brooklyn's El Puento, hip-hop curriculum allows students to express themselves and engage curriculum with creativity and innovation (Ladson-Billings, 2011). The curriculum allows teachers to

connect students' cultural experiences to the content in the classrooms (Morrison, Robbins & Rose, 2010; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Winn (2010) in an after-school session with formerly incarcerated girls describes her work as pedagogy of power as opposed to a program. The vision for her work with girls is to disrupt the school to prison pipeline by "providing an outlet for creativity, writing, and performance; placing the power in the hands of the girls rather than the institutions that incarcerated them" (p.321). The California assembly's select committee on the state of men and boys of color is partnering with the NAACP to convene leaders and community members to address issues affecting men of color. However, this response remains contextual as it is situated in the state of California. It is yet to be seen whether the momentum of the assembly can galvanize the nation. This framework is critical in enhancing the current research and advocacy work in school to prison.

I have illuminated the theoretical frameworks that will be utilized to guide the study and analysis. Each theoretical framework, structural racism theory and contextual and structural transformation and supports the other in exploring and understanding the complex issue of the school to prison pipeline phenomena and its influence on African American males. The contribution of the structural racism theory will allow the researcher to focus on the growing literature that suggests racial disparity in school discipline is rooted in historical and political structures in the United States. Over determinism will allow the researcher to examine how structural racism may have created a system that more often subjects African American male youth for discipline, subjects them to harsher discipline once in the system, increases their probability overall for

involvement in the juvenile justice system. Contextual responses, structural responses and possible structural transformation will allow the researcher to remain focused on the social justice nature of the study and not fall into the same trap of many studies that "count the bodies" (DuBois, 1903) caught in the tragedy of the school to prison pipeline without exploring the lives and communities that have been influenced by the tragedy. As the research proceeds I will be positioned to note the opportunities taken and opportunities for intervention and interventions leading to transformation.

Statement of the Problem

Twenty-five years of research details students of color overrepresentation in school discipline (Skiba et al, 2011; Rocque et al 2011; Raffaele et al, 2003; Price et al, 1992; Wu et al, 1982). Further, the research suggests school discipline policies are systematically funneling a large number of children of color and males from schools into the juvenile justice system. Currently, African American youth ten to nineteen years old comprise one-third and Latinos one-fourth of the juvenile prison population in the United States. Sixteen to seventeen year olds comprise fifty-one percent of the youth in residential correctional facilities. Further, eighty-five percent of the youth in correctional placement are male (Sedlak & Bruce, 2010). Juvenile justice statistics and school disciplinary referrals indicate that African American and Latino males constitute forty-five percent and thirty five percent respectively in detention and correctional systems. These statistics illuminate the overrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos in the juvenile justice system. Further, the statistics are significant because many juveniles have arrived in the justice system through the school system and are considered drop outs at

age sixteen and seventeen. Interventions for youth in the juvenile justice system primarily focus on youth character building. However, there is a paucity of literature regarding preventive methods for interrupting the pathway of juveniles from school disciplinary systems. The study of the school to prison pipeline is a relatively new phenomenon in the literature. However, for African Americans the research has provided ample evidence of racial disparity in school discipline practices and juvenile justice involvement. African American males have been criminalized since their arrival in the Americas. African Americans males were imagined as criminals that needed to be controlled to save the virtue of European American women (DuBois, 1978 [1903]). Well before that the act of running away for freedom was a criminal act. By the time of Brown vs. The Board of Education the nation had a well-established view of African American men as more likely to criminal and of treating intelligent actions as criminal. With this backdrop forced integration provided a breeding ground for the mistreatment of African Americans and an environment that routinely criminalizes African American males.

This research examines the sociopolitical and socio-cultural factors that undergird the stories of men who were incarcerated in their youth. Their reflections illuminate the ways in which the pipeline constricts the possibilities for an individual. Recent research has found zero tolerance policies and practices are ineffective in reducing student misbehavior and have contributed to the growth of the school to prison pipeline (Justice Center, 2011; Skiba et al, 2011). Additionally, statistical research regarding the school to prison pipeline especially, the statistics regarding school discipline, is extensive. However, a majority of the research is conducted with randomly selected youth utilizing

quantitative methodology for which generalizations have been made about youth caught in the pipeline. Few studies consider the systematically raced and gendered outcomes in the school to prison pipeline. Current research focuses on zero tolerance policies as the root of the school to prison pipeline problem without considering other socio-historical factors that may have aided in the construction of the pipeline or the individuals trapped in the pipeline. To my knowledge, no study has investigated the historical roots of the school to prison pipeline and its generational influence on African American males. This study is the first to examine adults who were incarcerated in their youth and how the pipeline impacted their educational and life trajectories. Further, no other study has utilized a methodology that includes both an analysis of the broader socio-historical implications of the school to prison system and an analysis of the broader implications for individual African American males impacted by the system.

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to move away from the current research that focuses on the individuals as autonomous agents who are ultimately responsible for the size of the school to prison pipeline. Instead, this study explores the school to prison pipeline as an interlocked and well-developed system in which individuals become trapped. This study adds to the growing body of literature that seeks to understand the school to prison pipeline as a system and seeks to understand the technologies of power that undergird the system. This study captures Merriam's sentiment that "power in combination with hegemonic social structures results in the marginalization and oppression of those without power" (Merriam, 2002). This study examines how the power of the system

impacted millions of African American males. It explores the issues of incarceration, race, and policy through the voices of those who are most affected.

The school to prison pipeline has been characterized as a disciplinary system that criminalizes students, worsens academic gaps, leads to students' exit from school, and increases the probability of students' involvement in the juvenile justice system. Within the system, the gender and racial disparities abound as African American males are disciplined more harshly for minor infractions. While some scholars and activists have responded to school consistently disciplinary practices and to the school to prison pipeline, the research questions that guide this study are conceived as an attempt to address our broader understanding of the pipeline and how the pipeline shapes the life possibilities of those caught in it.

Research Question 1: What are the broader socio-cultural and socio-political narratives that influence the construction of the school to prison pipeline, policy, and practice?

Research Question 2: How have the lived experiences of African American males been influenced by the school to prison phenomena?

Significance of the Study

The school to prison pipeline is a broad dynamic phenomenon that operates in particular socio-cultural milieus as a part of individuals' lives. I will contribute to the growing, but limited knowledge regarding the school to prison pipeline. This study will define the conceptual model and its origins, build upon a preliminary analyses that shows

that the “problem” resides in the system as opposed to with the youth stuck in the pipeline, and it will contribute new knowledge for understanding the lived experiences of African American males influenced by the school to prison pipeline system. Taken together the areas addressed in the study account for the gaps in the ways we understand and account for the disciplinary system as a power structure. Our further understanding will illuminate the details of a school to prison pipeline that predictably, consistently, and disproportionately negatively impacts African American males.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This review focuses on the research that describes and analyzes the path from school discipline to the juvenile justice system known as the "school to prison pipeline." The review includes an overview of school discipline, zero tolerance policies in action, and racial disparities in school discipline. Studies indicate that cultural politics have led to the under-education of African American youth and have disproportionately pushed them into the juvenile justice system. There are many studies illuminating the detrimental effects of school discipline policies and practices on African American students; however, few have confidently established why the racial disparity exists. There is a need for more research that examines the root of the construction of the pipeline and the socio-historical factors that undergird and maintain its existence; further, no studies draw upon the generational voices impacted by the school to prison pipeline.

For generations, school systems have led African American males into juvenile justice systems, but research has largely ignored their voices. The voices of African American males will help us understand the pathways of the school to prison pipeline, and how to interrupt the pipeline. If researchers continue to "count the bodies" without understanding how systemic policies and practices have been interpreted through African American males affected by the system and how their choices have been constricted by these policies and practices no real solutions can be developed to improve the system that has impacted generations of boys and men. Attempting to solve a problem without consulting the people who are directly impacted is futile.

School discipline

Educators have been concerned with school discipline since the establishment of common schools (Tyack, 1978). Historically, educators resorted to corporal punishment, contacting parents, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions to manage student behavior (Rousmaniere & Dehli,n/d ; Martin & Nuzzi, 2004; Irby, 2009). As corporal punishment fell out of favor in the 1960's, schools began to more frequently utilize detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Skiba et al, 2000). Even though suspension and expulsions were not new forms of discipline they were implemented differently as school disciplinary practices began to shift (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004). According to Rousmaniere & Dehli (n/d), emerging approaches to control resulted in the establishment of norms of good behavior. Once norms for good behavior were established discipline would reinforce them. In short, as discipline reinforced norms for good behavior, it essentially became a mechanism for controlling school culture. By "culturally changing the apparatus of rules, technologies, and practices" (Rousmaniere & Dehli, p.67) schools ultimately change school discipline to the extent that the changes become embedded in the social curriculum (Skiba & Peterson, 2003). The work of establishing "norms" is infused with power; especially as "bad" non-compliant behaviors, even if unrelated to teaching effectiveness, are punished. In Lewis's (2006) study at three elementary schools she illuminates how a young African American student was disciplined for his excitement for getting the correct answer to a question his "raising the roof" motion was considered outside the norm of appropriate "good" behavior. Punishing is self-affirming exercise for the entity carrying out punishment. It defines criminality and punishing and the process

legitimizes itself. At the same time it alters those who end up defined and subsequently treated as criminals. Foucault (1977) suggests there is power in punishing; for this reason the shift in school discipline from school professionals handling student behaviors to law enforcement and juvenile justice courts handling student behaviors has important implications. Acknowledging this shift is critical because this study is concerned with understanding the formation of a school to prison pipeline, the cultural politics of power embedded within it, and the consequences of its routine functioning.

School Discipline in Texas

Texas is known for its "get tough on crime policies and practices" (Justice Policy Institute, 2000) that extend to the school and juvenile justice system. Texas' school system is the 2nd largest in the nation, and is one of nineteen states in which corporal punishment is a viable form of discipline (Lynch, 2012). Studies conducted by Texas Appleseed (2009) and the Justice Center (2011) suggests that Texas enforces harsh discipline policies that are harsher than those in most other states. In a study of one million Texas students, fifteen percent were sanctioned to alternative educational placements and eight percent were sanctioned to juvenile justice alternative educational programs (Justice Center, 2011). Students involved in school disciplinary actions, averaged eight suspensions or expulsions during their middle and high school years (Justice Center, 2011). Zero tolerance policies punish students harshly for minor misbehaviors and contribute to a significant increase in suspensions and expulsions, but do not lead to reduced criminal activity on campuses (Browne et al, 2001). Zero tolerance in Texas schools have reimagined student misbehavior as criminal behavior, and reduced

learning opportunities for students who are imagined and treated as criminals instead of developing students.

Zero Tolerance

Annual figures of school shootings and other severe crimes have remained consistent since 1985 (Reyonolds & Skiba, 2008); however, following several horrific school shootings fear about school crime has increased and provided a commonsense base of support for the use of harsh school disciplinary practices. Amidst the notion of violent schools, zero tolerance policies were initially considered a fair and appropriate approach to ensuring school safety. Its history is embedded in the military's zero tolerance drug codes of the 1980's, drug sentencing policies, and the Gun Free School Act of 1994. The 1994 Gun Free School Act had a significant influence in the creation of zero tolerance policies. The policy mandated one year expulsion and referral to juvenile court for any student in possession of a firearm on school grounds or within 1000 feet of school property (Bailey & Ross, 2001; Tobin, 2001). In 1997, the law was extended to include the same sanction for drug and drug paraphernalia possession on school property (Irby, 2009; Casella, 2003). This legislation sped up many school district shifts to zero tolerance disciplinary approaches because funding was attached to state's implementation of polices regarding weapons on school property (Irby, 2009; Ashford, 2000). Further, the relationship between schools and law enforcement was federally sanctioned because of the Guns Free Act (Reyes, 2006).

Similar to drug sentencing policies, zero tolerance policies include pre-established sanctions. The zero tolerance policies ushered into schools followed the same

philosophies the criminal justice system utilized in drug sentencing, but now applied them to students (Irby, 2009; Bromberg & Cohen, 2003). They also produced similarly racially disparate results. Whereas drug related zero tolerance policies for adults led to the mass incarceration of African American males for primarily non-violent offenses (Mauer, 2009; Irby, 2009; Alexander, 2010). Similar practices in schools led to disproportionate numbers of African American males disciplined in school. Proponents of these policies agreed with the rhetoric of safe streets and safer schools even as the data suggested that the policies did not increase school safety (Kupchik, 2010;McGrew, 2008). In 1989, zero tolerance policies were implemented in California, New York, and Louisville (Verdugo, 2002). New York was the first state to apply zero tolerance to any disruptive behavior (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

The creation of zero tolerance policies can also be understood through the lens of rare and random societal events. In the 1990's there were approximately twenty school shootings (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007); these shooting ignited the rhetoric of school violence. Commentators began to refer to a school violence epidemic. For example after Columbine the ABC network aired 383 stories regarding the tragedy, news anchor Sam Donaldson cautioned parents about "angry teens showing up in our towns." Bob McNamara of the CBS network called school shootings "an American nightmare that too many schools know too well" (Stossel, 2007). The threat of school violence fueled increased funding (Heck, 2004) and the utilization of unproven yet emotionally satisfying zero tolerance practices. New practices included police departments on school campuses, student identification cards, metal detectors, cameras, elevated data collection

of student performance and behavior as student surveillance methods (Hess & Leal, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Noguera, 1995).

The political argument for zero tolerance polices in the Texas Education Code was that they provide a safer school environment. Alongside increased surveillance policies, the state mandated referrals to disciplinary alternative education programs for students with severe criminal behaviors at school (such as fighting or possession of drugs and/or weapons). According to he Texas Education Code the schools also have the power to make discretionary referrals to alternative education programs. Those who are accused of minor violations such as talking back to a teacher, profanity, or disrupting class are now subject to severe punishment. Discretionary disciplinary referrals account for the majority of the disciplinary referrals while state-mandated referrals for serious offenses constitute a small percentage of disciplinary referrals. It is the "discretion" that is expanding the school to prison pipeline and creating racial disparities. Discretionary referrals have expanded the criminalization of students and adding an implicit definition of criminality to now include back-talking, cursing, and even silliness. IT can be argued that there is now a broad "prison track" in schools just as there is a college-prep track.

Discretionary disciplinary referrals and ticketing of students as young as six years old (Goodwin, 2010; Texas Appleseed, 2010) has changed the landscape of discipline in public school environments. Ticketing involves giving citation that come with fines or in some cases required court appearances by students and their guardians (Cole et al, 2011; Texas Appleseed, 2010). Texas schools have become home to local law enforcement as 163 school districts have their own police departments (Advancement Project 2010).

According to a study conducted by Texas Appleseed (2010) of 22 large school districts, police officers were responsible for issuing 1000 tickets to elementary students. According to Hirschfield (2008), schools are not just imagined as more criminalizing they are in fact acting more like criminal institutions.

A complex set of findings have emerged from the zero tolerance literature. In recent years the most prominent is the ineffectiveness of zero tolerance and the devastating impact on African American males. According to the American Psychological Association's Zero Tolerance Task Force, zero tolerance practices of suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement have not made schools safer. Instead, these practices have increased students probability of dropping out of school and of their involvement in the juvenile justice system. In a study utilizing survey data and structural equation modeling (Mayer & Leone, 1999), suggest that the increased use of surveillance has done little to impact the factors that influence school violence and disruption. Further, Chen (2008) in a study of 712 high schools found that after controlling for community crime rates and school characteristics, schools with harsh discipline policies had increased discipline referrals and crime rates. Nationally, the increased utilizations of suspensions and expulsions have not been linked to severe criminal behaviors at school. Rather, the sanctions have been linked to minor infractions (Justice Center, 2011; Texas Appleseed, 2007&2009). Moreover, the harsh disciplinary practices have led to a startling increase in suspensions from 1.7 million in 1974 to 3.3 million in 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). In a recent study in Texas researchers examined a million students in the state from varying districts. The findings

revealed only three percent of the disciplinary referrals were for state-mandated offenses (Justice Center, 2011). Over the past 15 years research on zero tolerance policies have suggested their ineffectiveness. The literature is saturated with studies indicating an enormous amount of suspensions, expulsions and arrests due to non-violent disruptive behaviors (Kupchik, 2010, Mendez & Knoff, 2003, Toby, 2002; Winbinger et al, 2000). Scholars offer critiques, recommendations, and alternative approaches to school safety. Proposed alternatives include restorative justice, decrease use of surveillance methods, and improved teacher training (Skiba et al, 2003; Strickland, 2004; Sheldon, 2004; Ayers, et al, 2001). Nonetheless, data and analysis from the literature has not swayed policymakers or the public away from demonstratively ineffective approaches to healthy, safe, orderly schools where children have an equal opportunity to learn.

Racial Disparity

In 1975 the Children's Defense Fund released the first large scale study to report on racial disparities in school discipline. Utilizing national survey data the findings from the study indicated that African American students were three times more likely to receive suspension in comparison to their European American peers (Skiba et al, 2000). A surge of racial disparity research in the 1980's focused on middle and high schools, and consistently found that African Americans were referred more often than their peers to school authorities for disciplinary actions (Skiba et al, 2000; Nichols et al, 1999; Thornton et al, 1988). Subsequent research with elementary school students paralleled the middle and high school findings. Despite undisputed evidence dating back to 1975 that posits racial disproportionality in school discipline, African American students continue

to endure harsher punishments. More recent research grapples with why the racial disparity perpetuates.

The most common explanations for racially disparate punishments have been socioeconomics, cultural mismatches between African American students and European American teachers and administrators, and differential rates of misbehavior between racial groups (considers misbehavior at face value). Early research (Brantlinger, 1991; Wu et al, 1982) in school discipline posited that racial disparities could be accounted for with socio-economics. According to Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov (1994), the confluence of socioeconomics and neighborhood characteristics made it difficult to determine the contribution to the racial achievement/ discipline gap. However, current research has examined the relationship of socio-economics and race and found race remains significant after controlling for socioeconomics (Wallace et al, 2008; Skiba et al 2002). Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, (2010) suggest that simply examining demographics such as class and race do not adequately explain the disparities in disciplinary referrals.

For decades, researchers insisted that students of color had more problem behaviors than European American students (Bartollas, 2003). However, in self-report surveys (McCarthy & Hodge, 1987; Wu et al, 1982) there have been no differences in types of behaviors among African Americans and European Americans; however, there has been a difference in the sanctions for students of color. Skiba's (2002) study in a large urban district found no difference in behaviors among African American and European American students; however, African American students were more likely to receive disciplinary sanctions. Using data collected from 45 elementary schools, Rocque

(2010) analyzed 22,195 ratings of student behaviors to determine whether differential behavior played a role in the number of referrals. Accounting for overall behavior and controlling for between-school differences and socioeconomics Rocque (2010) found that race is the strongest predictor of suspensions and expulsions. However, Roccque declares the findings are inconclusive and do not explain racial disparity. Further, Rocque (2010) posits that findings cannot be attributed to teacher bias and, that neither student behaviors nor school policies account for disparity. In the studies above, student behaviors were never observed only analyzed through school data.

Early genetic theorist (Darwin, 1859; Galton, 1869) contended that behavioral traits were directly related to genetics. These theorists attempted to prove that African Americans had innate moral and cognitive deficiencies that led to criminal behavior. From their understanding of African American inferiority, the connection of African Americans to deviance and criminality was not surprising. The late 19th century attempts to link African Americans biological deficits to criminal behaviors eventually gave way to the more recent notions of cultural differences between races and the notion that some races are more civilized than others (Muhammad, 2010). The notions of pathological cultural norms and values have remained steadfast in relationship to some scholars perceptions of African Americans and crime. The same mix of cultural and genetic theories are utilized to account for disparity in school discipline. In a study of office disciplinary referrals, Irvin and colleagues (2004) posit "cultural values" account for the differential treatment of students. Further, Murdock et al. (2000) posits African American students do not value education, are less motivated and are thus more likely to be

disciplined. These sweeping inferences neglect to account for the discrimination and racism students endure in school environments from as early as three years old (Lewis, 2003; Rocque, 2011). For many students, once they have reached middle school they have encountered repeated incidents of neglect and injustice and have lost trust in the educational professionals and system (Gregory& Ripski, 2008; Stevenson, 2008). Therefore, school disengagement could be due to racial hostility and mistreatment (Rocque, 2011; Ferguson, 2008). Moreover, the systematic impact of racial brutality and mistreatment upon the school to prison pipeline remains understudied and theorized.

Racialization

> "As we inherit this legacy of inscription (pain) on our brown bodies culturally and through the U.S. educational system, it is whiteness that informs our sense of self. It is an attempted mental rape, a forced and profoundly deep entry, a painful process that takes young and tender minds and grinds itself like sandpaper into the tender tissue until as many layers of skin as possible can be scraped away. How do we inform ourselves, especially when we think we have found ourselves and in reality we have not really been ourselves for over five hundred years?" (Urrieta, 2003)

The socio-cultural and sociopolitical factors that have led to the misrepresentation, miseducation, and mass imprisonment of African Americans can be understood in terms of how African American males have been racialized. In their effort to understand African American life and education, social scientists have ironically contributed to the misrepresentation of African Americans (Scott, 1997). These misrepresentations have contributed to the miseducation and mass imprisonment of African American males. Fashola (2005), Perry et al (2003), and Hale (2001) highlight African American males' capacity to achieve, yet choose not to deeply engage the socio-historical contexts that

perpetuate miseducation and mass imprisonment. Other researchers and educators have focused on the problems without creating solutions to the structural racism that limits African Americans possibilities.

Misrepresentation

Since the formation of the United States people of Africans descent have been positioned by European colonizers as violent, hypersexual, uncivilized, and in need of control (Feagin, 2000). This ideology has been perpetuated in scholarly work. Dubois (1903) in his assessment states:

> "…sociologists gleefully count his bastards and his prostitutes, the very soul of the toiling, sweating black man is darkened by the shadow of a vast despair. Men call the shadow prejudice, and learnedly explain it as the natural defense of culture against barbarism, learning against ignorance, purity against crime, the "higher" against the "lower" races"(p.20).

Scholars of European descent have routinely produced work that maintains hegemony. They have provided rationale for policies and practices that have benefited European Americans at the expense of African Americans. Many have highlighted what they have considered to be problems in the African American community, but without sufficient acknowledgment of social context within which African Americans have lived. Without this acknowledgement African Americans are imagined as pathological instead of as dynamic survivors. Theorizing crime and pathology as it relates to African Americans began on the heels of the emancipation of slaves. In the 1800's, German American G. Hoffman argued against the idea that racism or discrimination in American society impacted African American prisoners. He argued that, "the negro was placed under exactly the same conditions, social, and economic, as the white race." He further

offered that, “there is no other way to explain the morality and criminality differences other than their race proclivity” (Muhammad, 2010 p.44). Race and crime has a long history, with works like Hoffman’s 1896 *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* solidifying the notion of “blackness” and crime (Muhammad, 2010). Hoffman’s work was the first study that included an analysis of African American crime statistics. Muhammad (2010) posits that Hoffman’s work ushered in Jim Crow laws by describing African Americans as predisposed to uncivilized and criminal behavior. Hoffman described black crime, disease, and death as a consequence of a flawed man or woman, but self-destruction and crime among European Americans as a consequence of a flawed society (Muhammad, 2010). The early work of Hoffman is consistent with generation of pseudo-science that not only lead to misconceptions about African Americans, but also support social policy that specially harms African Americans.

The imagining of African American males among scholars positioned them as “juvenile delinquents or criminals” and “absent fathers.” According to Hill (1959) in his research examining the cultural components and social relationships of youth in an urban environment; “juvenile delinquency is a way of life for Negroes living in urban cities” (p.277). In his attempt to understand how social status impacted urban youth he over-generalized and neglected the larger social context of power and privilege that contribute to the types of criminal behaviors he examined. The Moynihan Report (1965) suggested the root of the African American “struggle” was the “Negro” families living in urban environments with their “crumbling” family structure. The report posited that ineffective parenting in female led households put African American males at the center of the

problem. The title of Chapter IV, *The Tangled Pathology,* cements the image of the African American family, and particularly the male, as pathological. The report asserted that "most Negro youth are in danger of being caught up in the tangled pathology, which has created the predictable crime and delinquency rates" (p.67). While the goal of the report was to promote a national call to address a crisis, it further normalized the understanding of African American males as inferior, pathological, and criminal (Brown, n/d). The report discussed the resiliency of African Americans to survive American racism, but does not situate the racism as pathology.

When we consider contemporary crises such as the Sandy Hook and Columbine shootings and gang violence, African American males involved in gang violence are characterized as criminal and flawed, while European American males involved in school shootings are more likely to be characterized as troubled, victims of bullying, or mentally ill. Hoffman (1896) argued in response to the crimes and death of Europeans Americans, a need for "emergency measures" to correct societal issues. While for African Americans he posited nothing should be done for a race that is vanishing, today scholars and policy makers have offered different solutions to address violence depending on whether or not the problem was imagined as mainly concerning African Americans. The work of Hoffman and other early "race" scholars have endured in the ways we understand race and crime, and, how we understand discipline and crime in our nation's schools as it relates to African Americans.

Scholars and educators continue to grapple with how racism is embedded in our society and in particular our schools (Lewis, 2003; Marx, 2006), but remain silent and no

regard to white supremacy. A vast body of research on learning and human development supports the reality that African American boys can be educated at the highest levels and that African American boys are as innately smart, talented, and innovative as children from any other group (Lee, 2000, Perry et al., 2003). However, the statistics regarding the education of African American boys remains bleak as the system consistently poorly prepares African American boys academically (Ladson-Billing, 2010; Polite, 1994). African American males have been racialized in our schools and popular imaginations. This racialization process is rooted in a history of African American enslavement, oppression, and discrimination.

In the 1980's-1990's, the language in reference to African American males changed from "pathological" to "endangered" (Brown et al, 2011). According to Gibbs (1987), African American males are "in danger" as they have been miseducated, mistreated and mishandled in every social institution from the education, criminal justice to social welfare systems. The discourse was made public with advocates such as Jawanza Kunjufu who made African American males the subject of inquiry. Thoughtful engaged researchers analyzed the challenges and called for mentorship programs and single sex schools for African American boys that changed the educational outcomes for a few. However, for the majority, the change in language and research during the 1990's (Brown et al, 2011) did not impact the public schools penchant for under-education and the systematic push from school to the juvenile justice system for African American males.

According to McDermott et al. (2009) educators treat race and class as traits versus social activities that happen through experiences in school environments and society at large. Pollock's (2004) study examines the silencing of race on school campuses. She shows how students of color are racialized and mistreated, and is joined by colleagues who show that few talk about issues of "unintentional racism" in classrooms (Marx, 2006). These and other scholars show that race and racism are parts of the education system and central to the discipline system as well (Farmer, 2010; Robbins, 2008; McDermott, Raley & Ochi, 2009).

In a system of silence regarding race it is easy for policies like zero tolerance to be racialized. Zero tolerance policies prompt the practice of excluding juveniles from classrooms based on perceived misbehavior; especially African-American students who are already marginalized and imagined as deficient. Exclusion from the classroom contributes to the lack of academic achievement among African American and subsequently to racial achievement gaps (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Arcia, 2006).

Although literature suggests that African Americans, Latino, and Native Americans are disproportionately disciplined, the findings for Latinos population have been inconsistent. According to parent surveys administered by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2003) 20% of Latino students in grades 7 through 12 had been suspended or expelled, which is a statistically significantly lower rate ($p < .001$) than for African American students (35%) and a statistically significantly higher rate ($p < .001$) than for European-American students. Krezimen and

colleagues (2006) however, found that Latino students had similar to lower odds of suspension in comparison to their European American peers. Studies examining the relationship between achievement and student discipline when controlling for grade point average found that race remains the strongest predictor of disciplining (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986).

Miseducation

African American males have been and continue to be misrepresented in popular discourse and the public imagination. Many African American boys have been imagined as men and criminals before they reach middle school (Ladson-Billings, 2011). This misrepresentation is a factor in their miseducation. According to Ladson-Billings (2011) our schools are the primary source of problems encountered by African American boys, she states:

> "Many schools see teaching African American boys as a daunting challenge. However, in many schools the primary focus of Black male children's educational experience is maintaining order and discipline rather than student learning and academic achievement. By the time Black boys reach the 3rd or 4th grade their teachers and other school personnel no longer treat them like children, but rather like men" (p.7).

Ladson-Billings (2011) describes schools as spaces of disproportionate sanctions. She describes her observation of a third grade classroom with an Asian American boy who repeatedly got out of his seat. She recorded eight incidents of the student getting out of his seat in which the teacher redirected him and asked him to be seated. An African American boy got out of his seat once the teacher immediately sent him to the principal's office. Ladson-Billings (2011) states that the teacher did not realize that she had treated the African American boy differently, but "her (the teacher) classic fear of losing control

fostered criminalization" (p.9). Unfortunately, this is not an isolated circumstance. Disproportionate treatment happens on a frequent basis. A students' academic success is influenced by teacher's expectation, and when teachers expect students to be well-behaved or out of control or high or low achievers, their actions will help produce the expected behavior (Gay, 2000; Good & Brophy, 1994). Teachers tend to have higher academic expectations for European American and Asian American students than for African American students (Apple, 2004; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billing, 1995).

In this so called "post racial" America it is important to consider how race remains in the forefront of our educational system, but is silenced by notions of "color-blindness." In her study of hundreds of civil rights complaints through the Office of Civil Rights Pollock (2004) found that dialogue that acknowledged race were consistently avoided in formal meetings on school campuses. Meanwhile racist dialogue and attitudes permeated the broader school environment and impacted students of color. Her findings illuminate the danger of silence. Students of color were racialized and mistreated, but few beyond impacted students and parents talked openly about race and racism (Foster, 2005; Marx, 2006). The work of previous scholars (Polite, 1994; Polite and Davis, 1999, Noguera, 2008) illuminates the salience of race in our educational system. In exploring African American boys' educational experiences, problematizing race is a concern, but the failure to recognize it would be a disservice to African American boys (Howard et al, 2011). Racism becomes a part of the education system thus a part of the discipline system (Farmer, 2010; Robbins, 2008; McDermott, Raley & Ochi, 2009). In a system of silence regarding race it is easy for policies like zero tolerance to slip into an unacknowledged

but nonetheless present racial logic. Zero tolerance polices and practices of exclusion for African-American boys contribute to the lack of academic achievement among racially categorized groups and hasten their entry into the criminal justice system (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Arcia, 2006).

School to Prison

African American boys have been misrepresented and miseducated in such intense ways that incarceration has the potential to become a part of individual African American boys' psyche; a part of a normal trajectory as represented in the following observation. In Lewis's (2003) study of school-aged children she overheard a conversation between an African American male third grader and his former teacher. The teacher asked the young boy what he wanted to do and "he said he wanted to go to college, but first he had to go to prison" (p.54). The teacher was horrified and asked him to clarify his response and the young boy said "All Black men go to prison." He thought it might be better to serve his prison term prior to college rather than afterwards. According to Lewis (2003) the teacher attempted to explain why prison was not a normal course of action, but the young boy was skeptical.

As incarceration has reached its highest level in history for African American males; the number of suspensions for African American males has kept pace. At least three million students have been suspended and expelled (Justice Center, 2011; Tuzzolo, 2006). According to Noguera et al., (2006) differential selection in the classroom account for disciplinary referrals in the same way as arrest rates. Differential selection contributes to increased numbers of African American males in the juvenile justice system similar to

the disciplinary referrals in the educational system. This is an important factor to consider in understanding the school to prison pipeline. Student arrests in school for minor offenses or sanctions to alternative educational programs are integral parts of the school to prison pipeline. Students who begin in the disciplinary alternative educational programs are then more likely to transition to the juvenile justice system, and once in that system academic achievement becomes an afterthought rather than central to youth's developmental trajectory. Concern shifts from education to controlling. According to Browne (2003), the zero tolerance environment creates a school of "maximum security and minimum learning" (p. 15) with many juveniles being sent to disciplinary alternative education programs. As they are forced out of traditional school settings to disciplinary school settings their entry into the juvenile justice system is hastened (Farmer, 2010; NAACP, 2007). The Justice Center (2011) posits that the over-utilization of expulsions, suspensions, and transfers to alternative educational setting are "pushing out" students. Frequent out of school suspension make it difficult for students to remain engaged in school, leading many to leave school for lack of progress. Students who are expelled or frequently suspended are more likely to repeat a grade, drop out of school, or become involved with the juvenile justice system (Justice Center, 2011; Advancement Project, 2010). The policy that was intended to keep schools safe and make them more accountable for student achievement actually pushes larger numbers of students out of school and into the juvenile justice system.

As teachers are guides to educational success they are also guides to educational failure. Discretionary referrals for talking back to a teacher, profanity, or disrupting class

account for the majority of referrals to disciplinary alternative education programs. Teachers are responsible for the majority of the discretionary referrals, and are thus the prime entry point into the school to prison pipeline; they set students on a path to the juvenile justice system (Fowler et al., 2008). Teacher attitudes and feelings regarding students help determine how harshly a student will be judged.

It is important to consider how cultural biases impact the potential for greater discretionary referrals for African American boys. Teachers' cultural biases toward students of color have been well documented (Marx, 2006, Pollock, 2004, Meador, 2005; Noguera, 2008). Racial inequity remains a barrier to success primarily because many teachers and schools have set up an environment that does not support African American boys (McDermott, Raley & Ochi, 2009). Once a child has entered the justice system it is even more difficult for the child to change his trajectory.

Reframing the Issue

While I have highlighted the plight of African American boys, my ultimate hope is to begin to reposition African American males as victims of a complex set of circumstances that have over-determined their likelihood of being identified as the problem and involved in the justice system. As educators and researchers we have taken our focus away from the structural problem and put our focus on the agency of individual actors. As first understood by DuBois (1903), we have moved away from a focus on the socio-cultural and sociopolitical factors and instead moved toward policies and practices that "fix" the African American male without fixing or even fully acknowledging the structural problems within institutions. A shift in our analyses of African American males

from misrepresentation to representation, from miseducation to possibilities for education, and from mass imprisonment to freedom (Brown et al, 2011), Brown et al. (2011) would require researchers to "move toward a new narrative of African American males." Brown et al. (2011) suggests moving away from a narrative of pathology and a disruption of the "crisis narrative", examine the conceptual and analytical flaws in discourse. As mentioned previously, the methodologies utilized in the 1960's-1970's to examine racial culture positioned African Americans and particularly males as "impoverished" and "emasculated" (p. 19). In the 1980's-1990's many scholars described African American males in terms of "crisis", but again positioned the African American as the problem (Legette, 1999; Brown et al., 2011). To fully understand the construction of the pipeline we have to move beyond these framings and consider the socio-cultural and socio-political factors that surround African Americans and that keep many African American children trapped in the school to prison pipeline.

A reframing of our understanding of the broad circumstances facing African American students does not negate the need for contextual responses, but rather increases the possibility that contextual and structural responses can lead to structural transformations. Contextual responses, such as equipping African American children to address racial affronts, teaching student to seek out caring adults when they feel mistreated, or partnering with parents to develop strategies to confront policies and practices that perpetuate racial harm, all have the potential to increase academic achievement and lessen African American males' entry to the criminal justice system. Further, these responses are a vehicle for repositioning African American males and

creating alternative, more nurturing policies and practices and eventually structural transformations (Foster, 2005).

As the educational system struggles with achievement gaps, funding gaps, and lagging competitiveness in a global economy (Kraehe et al, 2010), repositioning African Americans males is only one component for addressing a daunting set of challenges. There is a need for multiple solutions for the "complex multilayered" set of circumstances for African American students; solutions for one single issue will not resolve the ranges of challenges of overrepresentation in special education, high rates of push outs/dropouts, or lower standardized testing scores (Kraehe et al, 2010). As Perry et al suggest the ideal standard would be to educate toward excellence for all.

Substantive shortcomings of previous studies

There are a number of substantial gaps in the literature that surrounds the school to prison pipeline, while Kupchik (2010) suggests that African American students receive harsher discipline when perceived or real academic difficulties are present. The research does not account for the educational inequalities embedded in our nation's schools. There is no correlation between school discipline and school safety. Further, studies that examine the school to prison pipeline focus primarily on the zero tolerance policies of the 1980's and1990's without any attention paid to the construction of the phenomenon. McGrew's (2008) study in a juvenile detention center that housed approximately 1,318 boys and girls focused primarily on the poverty of the children in system. McGrew (2008) suggested increased financial resources to families and school supports could limit student's involvement with the juvenile justice system. His cursory mention of race and

racism neglected to address the impact that race has on teacher attitudes and school policies that leads African American boys into the juvenile justice system.

Methodological shortcomings of previous studies

In response to the criminal nature of African American prisoners in 1894, Dr. Ball stated, " …we might attempt to ascribe this greater criminality to lack of fair treatment, and prejudice on the part of the white man; but in the north we are supposed to be exempt from this accusation" (Muhammad, 2010 p.43). Dr. Ball understood that statistical analyses were not enough evidence to suggest the greater criminality of any group. The school to prison pipeline is a relatively new area of research, but there have been numerous studies that document a potential correlation between harsh disciplinary polices, academic achievement and juvenile justice involvement. While, the racial disparity of school discipline has been well documented, most of the studies have been descriptive in nature primarily utilizing a survey methodology and statistical analysis. The Justice Center's (2011) recent study utilized multivariate analysis to examine school discipline among a million Texas students. While the study was ground-breaking in its ability to capture a large population of students and control for socioeconomic, school characteristics, and gender in determining racial disparity, it did not capture the impact harsh disciplinary polices had on students and their communities. Further, Wallace and colleagues used survey data to examine the racial and gender effects on school discipline. The study found that African American students were more likely to be disciplined than their European American peers. Finally, Skiba et al (2011) using data from 364 elementary and middle schools found that African American students were more likely to

be referred to the office for problem behaviors. The study helped identify and describe a phenomenon however, none have been able adequately explain why the disparity exists.

Chapter Summary

Understanding the literature on racial disparities and school discipline provide a groundwork for more fully understanding the construction of the school to prison pipeline. Many scholars have made important contributions to our understanding but as a whole the literature does not address the day-to-day realties for African American youth that lead to their higher rates of inclusion in the criminal justice system. The connections between race and the designation of "criminal" are still under theorized as are the implication. The school to prison pipeline is still a new area of research that needs greater understanding for both educators and policy makers.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the socio-historical construction of the school to prison pipeline and how the phenomenon has impacted African American males. Hendry (2010) posits narrative is the oldest form of human inquiry. The study drew upon the life narratives of formerly incarcerated African American males, supporting interviews and archival materials from people and places in the primary participants lives, and extant academic literature and policy to explore the school to prison discourse and its impact of African American males. I focused on a specific Texas School District and Texas Justice System.

Texas has the 2nd largest school system in the United States and has established a reputation of being "tough on crime." At the same time the Texas Juvenile Justice System is experiencing extensive reform in the wake of abuse scandals. This study will add new voices of formerly incarcerated African American males to conversations about our understandings and reform plans for the schools and the juvenile justice systems to which they are linked.

Critical Narrative Analysis

Narrative methodology addresses questions of meaning and knowing within the human experience (Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007; Sosulski, Buchanan, & Donnell, 2010; Fairclough, 2003). Embedded in Narrative methodology is the scientific (physical), the symbolic (human experience), and the sacred (meta-physical) (Hendry, 2010) allowing

the researcher to make meaning of complex human conditions. Stories or narratives of marginalized populations provide counter stories to the dominant narratives (Fernandez, 2002; Ladson-Billing, 1998, Delgado, 1995).

Critical Narrative Analysis (Souto-Manning, 2007), a hybrid of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003) and Narrative Analysis (Ochs & Capps, 2001), will be utilized to examine the narratives. According to Dante (2005), Critical Narrative Analysis "has the ability to call into question immoral positions and inhuman practices that marginalize and terrorize people in an attempt to defrock them of their inalienable humanity" (p.4); further, Souto-Manning (2007) suggests Critical Narrative Analysis centers real world issues and promotes changes in systems. This makes it an ideal methodology for the issues and circumstances at hand.

Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on the power of language in a particular social milieu and Narrative Analysis focuses on meaning making through language and how people structure their experiences in society. Souto-Manning (2007) combines the two analyses to examine and question power and institutional discourses that become adopted in people's everyday narratives. Therefore, according to critical discourse analysis, analyzing discourse is essential to understanding social actions because "social actions become realities through discourse" (Souto-Manning, p.283). Broader context captured through interviews proved critical to the analysis because the narratives of African American males cannot be examined without considering their social contexts. African American males are racialized in the school and justice systems; the institutional

discourse becomes a part of their narrative and must be explored to make sense of their experiences.

Methodologically, Critical Narrative Analysis allowed me to explore the construction of the school to prison discourse and how African American males have been positioned in the discourse. The discourse of the school to prison pipeline was examined including the cultural politics that supports the pipeline and the disparate racial harm it inflicts upon African Americans. Documents that detail the school to prison pipeline reflect the conceptual understanding of discipline, crime, and punishment as it has changed overtime and has produced racial disparity. Policy documents by legislators, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies illuminate the state and national impact of school discipline policies on African American students; and reflect the impact of these policies on the pipeline itself. The documents help illuminate the cultural politics of popular policies that made harsh school discipline policies commonsense. The combination of document analysis, interviews of formerly incarcerated African American males, and the historical memory of community informants provide a robust data set for understanding the construction and maintenance of the school to prison pipeline and its impact on African Americans males.

Narratives/Life Histories

Bloom (2002b) states that, in narrative analysis it is important to make meaning of the telling rather than the tale. How stories are constructed help the teller and the told understand the person's social position, cultural understandings, and purpose. In the

African American oral tradition, narratives or storytelling is an interactive process in which the telling and the told share a heritage and culture (Banks-Wallace, 2002).

> Further, Gates (1989) posits narratives allow the researcher to explore "epistemological and ontological questions in our own voices" which is critical to the survival of African Americans. This oral tradition has a healing effect for families and communities (Banks-Wallace, 2002).

Narratives are an extension of ethnography because narratives are more than interviews, as they are akin to participant observations (Woods, 1985). Moreover, narratives offer greater depth to understanding lived experiences by limiting the researchers need to infer meaning. "Stories humanize us" (Delgado, 1989 p. 2440), and in many ways unite us. As an echo of DuBois longstanding criticism of sociological research, the current research on racial disparity counts the bodies in the pipeline without understanding the human being in the pipeline. Yet, the stories of "out groups" aid in destabilizing the stories of the majority group Delgado (1989) and move us to more nuanced understanding of both the individual decisions and the larger systems that at times overdetermine what decisions will be made or in affect forced. Further, stories "encourage us to overcome our ignorance of the lived experience of labeled groups (Goodley, 1996 p. 345). Delgado (1989) explains that majority group stories suggest "any inequality between black and whites is due to either cultural lag or inadequate enforcement of currently existing beneficial laws" (p.2413). Such stories allow the dominant group to remain comfortable in their superiority without feeling the need to challenge societal inequality.

This dissertation answers two questions that coalesce around the school to prison pipeline as a conceptual model.

Research Questions

1: What are the broader socio-cultural and socio-political narratives that influence the construction of the school to prison pipeline, policy, and practice?

2: How have the lived experiences of African American males been influenced by the school to prison phenomena?

Setting

The study was conducted in one community in Texas. Researchers (Banks-Wallace, 2002; Cormack, 1992; Howard, 1991) posit that physical and social environment is critical to the understanding of the stories being told. Further, the social and historical context influences how the story is created, the telling, and the interpretation. Additionally, Strauss and Corbin (1998) developed a conditional/consequential matrix to account for the influences of multiple dynamic systems on a particular phenomenon.

To understand the twelve formerly incarcerated African American men in this study it is important to understand the community they call home. Based on the findings from a two-month pilot study that included two formerly incarcerated African American males and three community members, in all of the interviews both the formerly incarcerated African American men and the community members illuminated the role their community played in nurturing and shaping the men. The community changed with significant local and national cultural and political events. Desegregation, crack epidemic/war on drugs, and community "buy-out" was heard repeatedly in the stories of

community even when the topic is the circumstances of African American youth. For this reason constructing a racial history of the community is critical to the larger study.

The study community is embedded within an urban city in Texas. The community was established in October 1953 after two significant events: the bombing of African American homes in the southern part of the city and the demolishing of homes in African American neighborhoods to build an airport. The community is a historical middle to lower class African American community (233 acres) that borders an affluent suburban European American community. The community was named after an African American leader and many of the streets in the neighborhood are named for famous African Americans. By 1961, the community was complete with 742 single-family homes, a twelve grade school, a shopping center and a park. The need for middle class African American housing sparked the growth of the community (Wilson, 1998). Unlike many of the public housing facilities built for African Americans during 1950's, this community resembled the subdivisions established for European Americans. This community is important not only for its historical relevance, but also because it was known as a community that upheld "All-American" middle class values. The families were dedicated to notions of family, work, and formal education (Wilson, 1998). The homeowners maintained their homes and community for individual and communal pride. In some ways the residents were able to escape the trappings of racism, but the middle class status of families in the community could not shield its residents particularly African American males from racial inequalities.

Study Population and Sampling Techniques

Snowball sampling was utilized to recruit participants. This technique is ideal for working with subpopulations that are difficult to locate and connect with except when vouched for by others with whom a relationship has been established. In the present study the fact that my biological father is a formerly incarcerated African American man provided the initial space for entry into a close knit community of men and their friends. I have collected data on the target population from a pilot study and have identified a key informant. The participants from the pilot study and informant connected me to other participants with similar demographic information. Pilot study participants grew up in the community during the initial establishment of the community. However, in the present study the goal of this sampling technique was to recruit participants from multiple generations. This approach provided historical depth and compliments current data about the educational system in the community and incarceration among men in the community.

All of the participants at some point lived in the local community and attended the local schools. Participant's ages ranged from 24 years to approximately 61 years old. The wide range of ages made it possible to understand the impact of the school system and justice system across generations. The participants self-identified as African American and male. Through the key informants, my family members, and their friends I identified other key informants including veteran and retired teachers who addressed the local school history and current structure. Additionally, I identified current and former chiefs of the Texas Probation Department that addressed the nature of the juvenile justice

system and the men that have entered the system from the study community. These key informants provided deeper understandings of the social contexts the men are embedded.

Data Collection Procedure

School to Prison Documents

A range of documents from policy reports to newspaper articles focus on school discipline and zero tolerance policies. According to Brown & Brown (2010), past and present documents "advance the sociopolitical" interests of European Americans and groups in power. Further, documents have the ability to shape the legal and educational identity of students (Kim, 2011; Robertson, 2009; Scott et al 2002). I argue that a range of state policies, research documents and reports, and news media have shaped the educational and legal identity of African American males as "uneducable" and "criminal." School to Prison documents are not the main data sources, but provide examples in which students are imagined in educational settings as criminal.

Formerly Incarcerated Men of Hamilton Park

Living narratives with twelve formerly incarcerated African American males were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews. The initial goal was to hear two stories from each generation, however I was able to hear 3 stories from some of the generations (1946-1964 Integration Generation, 1965-1976 War on Drugs Generation, and 1980-2000 Zero Tolerance). I asked some structured questions and probing questions, but allowed the teller to take his story in the direction he feels most appropriate. Follow-up questions were generated after initial interview were transcribed. Interviews were 1 ½ to 3 hours. Some participants were interviewed two or more times. When possible the interviews will be audio-taped (Table 1).

Table 1. Description of Men

Pseudonym	Age	Generation	Incarceration	Degrees	In/Out of the Game
Barry	60	Integration	•At 17 years old •Served 5 years	•GED, •Associate Degree •Plumbing electrician certifications while incarcerated. •Bachelor of Applied Sciences and Arts Degree.	•Out of the Game •Home improvements •Has not returned to prison
Carl	60	Integration	•At 18 years old •Served 10 years of 1st sentence •In and out of prison for 39 •On paper for one more year at time of interview	•High School Diploma •1st semester sophomore at Texas University at time of incarceration •Associate degree in prison	•Involved in some illegal activities

Table 1. Continued

James	59	Integration	•At 17 years old •Served 9 years	•GED while incarcerated •Bachelor of Divinity degree •Master of Counseling degree	•Out of the Game •He has not returned to prison since his initial incarceration •Owns private counseling practice •Pastor and Administrator health services organization
Blake	42	War on Drugs	•At 19 years old •Served 16 years •At the time of the interview, eleven more years to spend on paper	•GED and •Information technology certificate while he was incarcerated. •Welding school, and currently enrolled in an online program •Associate of Information Technology degree	•Out of the Game •Working a variety of jobs

Table 1. Continued

McCall	41	War on Drugs	Served 5 years	•High School diploma-night school •Electrician certificate while incarcerated	•Out of Game •Involved in illegal activities •He has not returned to prison
Keith	40	War on Drugs	•At 19 years old •Served 3 years 1st time, 4 years 2nd time, and 4 years 3rd time •He was in and out of prison from 19 to 32 years old.		•Out of the Game •Involved in illegal activities
Scott	36	Wars Drugs/Zero Tolerance	•At 20 years old •Served 12 years •At time of interview, on paper for eight years	•GED, •Electrician, welding, plumbing, and culinary arts certifications while incarcerated	•In the Game •Enrolled in a truck driving school
Steven	34	Zero Tolerance	•At 20 years old •Served 5 years	•GED while incarcerated	•Working •Involved in some illegal activities

Table 1. Continued

Conner	33	Zero Tolerance	•At 20 years old •Served nine years	•GED •Vocational certifications While incarcerated	•In the Game •At the time of interview he was 3 month away from getting his CDL (trucking license)
Todd	34	Zero Tolerance	•Special drug program at 19 years old •Served less than a year. •9 years on paper	•High School Diploma •Some community college	•Out of the Game •Working in the fast food industry
Frank	27	Zero Tolerance	•At 17 for 6months. •Returned to prison 10 months later served 3 years. •Two years after he was released served another 17 months. •At the time of the interview he had been out of prison for 3 months.	•No GED or High School diploma	In the game
Timothy	24	Zero Tolerance	•At 19 years old •Served little less one year •On paper until 31 years old.	•No GED or High School diploma	•In the Game •Construction Work

The Community

Understanding where each participant fits into the community is essential to understanding the person. Thus, to understand the African American men in the study it is important to understand the macrosystem, mesosytem, exosystem, and microsystem. Community historians provided me with copies of archival community documents and newspaper articles. After initial information gathering, I collected additionally community archival data and interviews regarding the community from a local university's oral history library that provided information regarding the formation of the community, local schools, community organizing efforts, and demographics from the 1950's to the 1990's. Semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect community related data from four key informants, when possible the interviews were audio-taped.

Researcher's Journal

A research journal allowed me to record my thoughts and insights as they occurred and also became an important space for reflection and a space to account for my subjectivity (Bloom, 2002a). I took notes during the interview but also journal after the interviews, this process will allow me to locate myself within the research and capture the moments when researcher and participant identities were produced, reproduced, or transformed during the research process. This as part of my overall work proved invaluable as it helped me see that the school to prison pipeline, even as a meta-structure, is comprised not only of rules and outcomes it is also theoretically and ideologically produced by and through the understandings of those trapped within it or impacted by it,

myself included. The journal will capture my observations during the interviews, my fears, ideas, misunderstandings, mistakes, confusion, epiphanies, breakthroughs, and experiences. This journal will provide a reflective method of understanding how my attitudes, feelings, and subjectivity may impact data collection (Enomoto & Blair, 2002).

Ethical Dilemmas

John Rawls's theory of justice suggests that the flow of power and resources must benefit the least advantaged. The narratives of the men contained stories of their criminal histories, some of which they were prosecuted for but others they were not. As a researcher, it is my responsible to maintain a trusting rapport, establish informed consent, anonymity, and nonintervention (Meloy, 2002). I did not ask questions that lead them to disclose any criminal acts.

Data Analysis Procedure

Stage one: collective narrative (discourse)

The analysis for this study focused on examining text from a critical theory perspective (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer, 2000). According to Fairclough (2003) texts have power. Social agents create texts that are not just text for text sake, but a part of social structures, practices, and events. Researchers (social agents) have created texts to explain the construction of the school to prison pipeline. The meaning of the school to prison pipeline is not pre-existing, but is created by the relationship between the social agent, social structures, practices, and events. Social structures and social events are on a continuum of what is possible and what actually happens. This complex relationship is mediated by social practices (Fairclough, 2003). According to Fairclough (2003) in educational institutions examples of this complex relationship are seen in teaching and

educational leadership. Fairclough (2003) states, "social practices can be thought of as ways of controlling the selection of certain possibilities and the exclusion of others" (p.23).

The collective narrative or discourse of the school to prison pipeline will be analyzed using what Fairclough (2003) refers to as the "orders of discourse." The orders of the discourse is not about the nouns, verbs or what is being said but is the social practices embedded within the language. It is the possibilities and exclusions defined by the language. The orders of discourse are therefore the social organization that control linguistic variation and according to Althusser language is "overdetermined" by social elements (Althusser & Balibar, 1970). The current literature focuses on the failure of the educational and justice systems for African American males. Therefore, the analysis focused on the intersections between the historical construction of the school to prison pipeline and the African American male as criminal highlighting the im/possible and un/overdetermined spaces of social institutions (structures) that perpetuate the hegemonic discourse (Cary, 2003).

The analysis explored how African American males in the research are framed as "criminal". Further, the analysis explored how researchers neglect epistemological assumptions (the im/possible spaces of being African American male) that frame "delinquent" thus normalizing practices. Analysis explored the notions and framing of historical discourses: the notion of "criminal" subjectivity; overdetermined as a social construct; and systemic/institutional technologies of power. –How African American

males have been imagined and the construction of pipeline through historical and current text. How does the text "reflect/reinscribe" (Fairclough, 2003).

Stage Two: individual narratives

To maintain the integrity of the story and the participants' voice personal narratives were analyzed using two approaches. Living narratives allowed me to explore the participants' childhood experiences at home and school. Scholars (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Wu et al 1986) suggest that understanding the school to prison pipeline may well begin with understanding youth's elementary school experiences. In the African American community storytelling is sacred work; therefore, I chose an analysis that preserved the cultural aspects of the telling. The thematic analysis focused on the story told asking the following questions as outlined by Banks-Wallace (2002) 1) what function or purpose does the story serve in the context? 2) What key words and phrases are used to tell the story? 3) How does this story foster healing, nurturing, or communion (p. 416)? The themes were developed utilizing the participant's phrases, body language, and expression in the story. Further, this approach guided the themes of deeper meanings consistent with African American storytelling such as survival, faith and spirituality, friendship, family, and the African American culture, triumph of goodness, justice, and cunningness (Banks-Wallace, 2002; Goss & Goss, 1995; Goss-Barnes, 1989).

Secondly, the narrative was analyzed with McCormack's lens because there is more than one person's living narrative. Thus, to understand how stories were connected to create one interpretive story. The goal of this approach was to examine the data as a whole and each part providing "levels of analysis" (Dibley, 2011). The narrative was

examined from four different 'lens' (Dibley, 2011): language, narrative process, context, and moments to understand all viewpoints ultimately creating the interpretive story.

The language lens suggests a focus on the words used and how the teller expresses the story. Language could be impacted by relationships between the teller and the told and location of the telling. I had to consider that while their were similar experiences the telling of the story was not the same or repeated each story was a unique event (Dibley, 2011). This allowed me to consider the many ways in which human beings understand their truth.

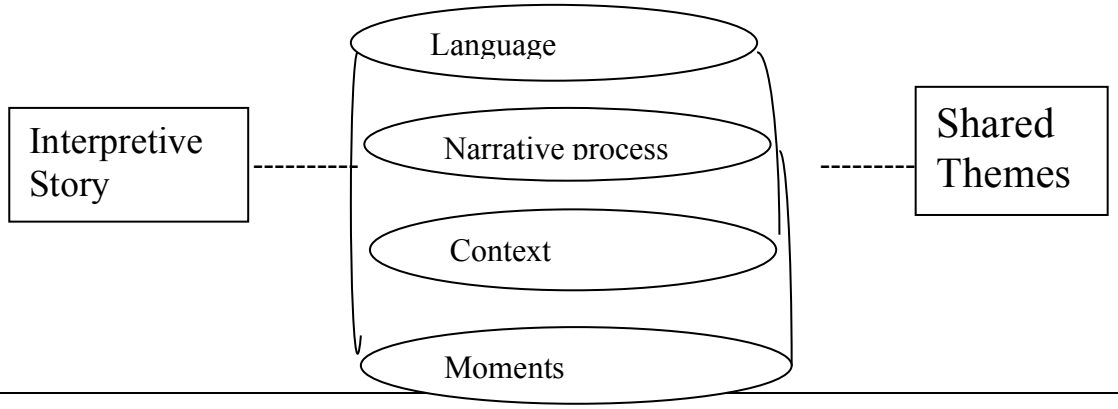
The narrative process is the structure of the words the teller uses to tell the story. This process allowed me to focus on the patterns of the words: the pauses, the pace/flow, the anger, or humor so the researcher can understand the emotions of the teller.

The lens of context insists the researcher focus on the space and time of the story. The cultural context impacts how and why the story is told. In the lens of context it will be important for the researcher to consider shared cultural contexts (Dibley, 2011).

The lens of moments draws the researcher's attention to sudden epiphanies or addresses issues that were previously unrecognized. According to Dibley (2011) capturing these moments may be rare, but if captured should be paid close attention to its place in the story. By the end of the process the researcher will have four separate threads leading to the same story. Additionally, the research journal notes will add social context to the story setting the scene for all of the characters in the tale. The purpose of this analysis is to respect the stories being told and to maintain the truth and spirit of the story. In the final analysis, this study will provide a complex picture of the ideologies of

power that construct and ensure the maintenance of the school to prison pipeline. Further, it will consider the circumstances of formerly incarcerated African American males who have been caught in the pipeline and the technologies, policies, and practices have shaped their lives.

Figure 1. McCormack's Lenses
(Dibley, 2011)



Chapter Four: A Community of Honey Suckles and Peaches

Community is not just a place where people find shelter. Community is a place where people find themselves. Communities provide the backdrop and context for questions of who and what we will become. The community is changed by the events that happen in the city and nation, sociocultural and sociopolitical realities are threads of the community that form and bind community and the people who live within it. In this study, a geographically boarded community with a population with a shared history provides the backdrop and context for the experiences of formerly incarcerated African American men. The men even once physically removed were a community presence. Their absence was felt, as was their presence once they returned.

The following chapter illuminates the history of the Hamilton Park Community. The historical narrative woven here is drawn from a number of sources, but relies most heavily upon a set of interviews conducted between 1987-1991 during William H. Wilson's research on the Hamilton Park Community. Written transcripts from 46 of his interviews of adult African American community members are maintained as part of the Oral History Collection of The University of North Texas Libraries. These interviews informed his eventual published work about Hamilton Park, and yet contain hours of valuable and as yet largely unused material. I supplement Wilson's interviews with my recently conducted interviews with formerly incarcerated African American men, teachers, community historians, and others with whom they interact. I also draw upon such archival documents as newspaper articles, notes from school board meetings, notes from meetings of civic organizations and interviewees personal collections of

photographs or other records from their own past and that of the community. Together, these resources provide material for a moving portrait-a shifting picture of the community as it has developed over time and its contours have informed the range of possibilities for formerly incarcerated African American men that called it home.

"Best Community Developed for Blacks"

The Hamilton Park neighborhood, named for an African American physician Richard T. Hamilton, was the first planned African American community in Dallas, Texas. The community was established in 1954 and was among a small minority of housing developments for African-Americans that diverged from large housing projects in Dallas. Hamilton Park was more akin to suburban subdivisions. The development of Hamilton Park was a sweeping change for the Dallas community, although Hamilton Park was not the first African American subdivision of its kind, its creation occurred during a significant period in our nation's history and Dallas's history. When the first residents moved to the community in 1954 the Supreme Court's landmark educational decision *Brown v. Board* declared separate but equal unconstitutional.

From the mid 1930's to 1950's, Dallas experienced rapid growth in a variety of industries. Dallas became a banking, commercial, and transportation center (Wilson, 1998). By the 1950's, Dallas was building wealth for diverse populations. Between 1952-1955 Cabell's Dairy hired the first African American driver. Schilitz Brewery hired its first African American distributor, and State Farm hired its first African American administrative assistant (Carter interview, 2012 and Wilson, 1998). Additionally, the Dallas baseball team drafted the first African American to play on a Texas league (Wilson, 1998; Dallas Morning News).

A small group of wealthy bankers, insurance company presidents, department store executives, newspaper publisher would be responsible for the development of Hamilton Park. Their wealth, political, and social power "advanced their own interests" including cultivating and advancing a diverse, industrious and successful population so as to help maintain a prosperous Dallas (Wilson, 1998). In the 1940's and 1950's, as middle-class European American families became a part of suburban landscapes, the Hamilton Park community was planned similar to many of the post- World War II European-American subdivisions (Wilson, 1998). The community's developers were not interested in building a community that modeled urban housing projects, therefore Hamilton Park was planned as an entire development, and thus, as community. In other places, African Americans had been unable to gain access to city's utilities and other amenities, however Hamilton Park was structured like a true middle class community-middle class meant the ability to afford a commodity or to live in a place-could mitigate the impact of race.

It is important to consider the debate regarding what constituted the African American middle class. Scholars argue that it is as much about economics as it culture (Wilson, J., 1978, Wilson, H., 1998). According to Wilson (1978), a significant African American middle class was developed between the 1950's and 1960's. Wilson (1978) posits prior to this time the African American middle class was too small to recognize or matter. However, Wilson (1978) argues his definition of middle class is based on economics. It does not account for the culture, ideals, or values of middle class status (Wilson, 1998). There were and are many working class and impoverished African

Americans that believe in the "American Dream" and demonstrate it in their everyday lives with their dedication to work, family, church, education, and civic organizations (Wilson, 1998). Despite this, or perhaps because of it structural racism forced many African Americans into low-wage jobs. There was and remains a dual labor force one for European Americans and one for African Americans (Christie, 2010). This reality held over time. In the 1950's, African Americans had to accept the employment that was available to them. The early residents of Hamilton Park were culturally middle class but in the 1950's many head of household residents had janitorial, clerical, and maintenance employment.

> " 268 were in maintenance or other unskilled occupation; 152 were in semi-skilled occupations such as service station attendants or drivers; 3 percent of the residents were in lower professional or managerial-22 were in lower professional or managerial occupations such as bookkeeping and department supervisors; 55 were in upper professional occupations (teachers, school administrators, or pastors) 17 were small proprietors who owned barber shops, restaurants, or filling stations; 23 were skilled laborers, 5 were in public safety such as firefighter" (Wilson, 1998 p.87)

Hamilton Park families' income ranged from $500-$1000 a month. Hamilton Park was an example of a growing middle-class even though constrained by time and space, nevertheless a place where integration and African American culture was beginning to take shape in the suburbs.

The streets in Hamilton Park recognized two of the European American men that helped form the community members. The other streets honored the lives of local and national figures in the African American community. Two streets, Hallum and Towns, were named for African American teachers of the African American elementary school and high schools in Dallas. The other streets, Bellefonte, Dandridge, Campanella, and

Bunche celebrated famous African American entertainers, athletes, and statesmen. One street pays homage to Ebony magazine and Oberlin College one of the first colleges to admit African Americans and women. (Hanks 62, years old-Hamilton Park Teacher; Wilson,1998). The neighborhood was composed of single-family homes, a shopping area, and a school.

Many early residents of Hamilton Park spoke with extreme pride. Ms. Gee stated in an interview with Dr. Wilson, "During that time Hamilton Park was the best community developed for Blacks." Further, due to discrimination middle-class African Americans were unable to move into European American suburban areas. The development of the Hamilton Park community was an interracial effort with the formation of the Dallas Interracial Association and the cooperation and funding of the Hoblitzelle Foundation (European American Karl Hoblitzelle of Interstate theaters), and the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce. While there was rhetoric of collaboration there was no doubt that the European American elite maintained power over and in the community for many years (Wilson, 1998). However, the discourse in both the European and African American communities spoke of the extraordinary vision, promise, and uniqueness of the development. Despite the development of African American suburban-style communities in Atlanta, Oklahoma City, Miami, and Memphis Councilman Miller stated, " a model of civic interest which will challenge cities all over the nation" and Ben Wooten, bank lender, declared, "no other city has had the courage to do what we have done in the creation of this subdivision" (Wilson, 1998 p.55). The development of Hamilton Park is historic in many ways as it captures a moment in time of racial suppression and racial

progress. While many European American veterans were able to purchase homes in the 1940's few builders were willing to build homes for African American veterans (Wilson, 1998). The housing communities in surrounding areas being bombed and the control enforced by European American elite during the development of the community maintained a level of racial suppression, but Hamilton Park represented racial progress and possibilities.

The majority of my interviews capture what can be described as idealist representations of the past. The shared memories are overwhelming positive, yet the respondents fond recollections are time and time again backed by specific examples. From these interviews, we learn the existence of shared positive narrative in large part backed by historical realties. However, as we will later in the chapter, even that positive narrative has its limits as many of the same respondents will point to times and circumstance where things began to go bad for the Hamilton Park community.

When asked about growing up in Hamilton Park, all of the formerly incarcerated men in the study recalled fond memories. Fondness and pride spanned generations, men who grew up in the neighborhood in the 1950's and men that grew up in the neighborhood in the 1990's spoke of the community in many of the same ways- as a great place to grow up with friends, family and support. Younger generations have the same level of pride in the community's history

> When Hamilton Park had the broadcast station-turn on the station-you know the tower-you know Hamilton Park was the first community for you know for upper-class black people in Dallas. From Oak Cliff and Pleasant Grove they moved out this way and tried to make it better for their kids. When I think of Hamilton Park School I think of as just you know…pride…really just pride. This was the first neighborhood established for black people that quote un quote had money so for

> people on other side of town that had money bought houses over here to try to make a better life for their kids and their kids (Steven 33 years old)

James describes his pride retrospectively of what it meant to grow up in a neighborhood like Hamilton Park

> Well I didn't know it at the time how impacted I was because I lived where I lived. Now as I have thought back on living in Hamilton Park it shaped me in terms of my personality and character the community had a culture-that culture shaped me (James 59 years old)

The men describe their connection to the people and the community. McCall (41 years old) states,

> That would be the unity as far as it is the same way now but back then it was even more so because we took care of each other and watched each others back you could leave your doors open didn't have to worry about breaking in because we were all united everybody knew everybody that was your foundation more unity more people getting along kids growing up here.

Timothy (24 years old) described a carefree childhood that was filled with playtime with friends, childhood pranks, and a neighborhood that children could explore.

> Man if you look at this neighborhood now you wouldn't know it but it was like vegetation. What I remember I could walk across the street to my cousin's house pick honey suckles they had peaches- couple of houses had oranges and lemons. If you feel bad just jump someone's fence and get some fruit.

The creation of the subdivision was not without challenges. According to early residents qualifying for a home in Hamilton Park was not solely about their ability to afford a mortgage. The residents said background checks were performed on each resident. Former and current neighbors, co-workers, and extended family were questioned regarding the applicant's values and habits (Wilson interviews, 1991).

However, once the residents were ensconced in the neighborhood they began to control their own community. The early residents were on the cusp of the Civil Right Movement "a NAACP representative told us it was important to organize we may not see the difference in our lifetime, but it would make a difference for our children and grandchildren" (Sherman 82 years old). There was a sense of obligation and responsibility to a greater purpose for themselves and the larger community. Two organizations that remain an influential force in the community were formed. The Civic League and Inter-organizational Council were formed to address community improvement needs and serve as a clearinghouse for organizational activities respectively. The Civic League founded in 1954 was the first organization in the community to develop a constitution and structured executive committees and standing committees (Bonner 63 years old-community historian; Hanks archival documents). The Civic League also organized programs for the youth in the community, social events for the adults and oversaw the construction in the park and recreation center. " I remember the parties for the teenagers, kids from all over the city wanted to come to our parties. We had the most beautiful got damn girls in Dallas" (Carl 59 years old). The Inter-organizational council collaborates with the Civic League on community programs and activities, but is also responsible for political organizing in the community. The Civic League was responsible for community improvement on both private properties and public spaces (Wilson, 1998 and Ms. Gee's archival documents). According to Rice, former secretary of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce, the residents were " looking toward the orderly development of a good community…to improve our homes,

streets, schools, churches, businesses, and living conditions…"(Wilson interview with Rice, 1990). The Inter-organizational Council founded in 1957 facilitates candidate forums and nominates candidates, voter registration and information, and organizes and takes a position around bond issues (Key 60 years old; Wilson, 1998). The churches, The First Baptist Church of Hamilton Park, Hamilton Park United Methodist Church, and the Hamilton Park Church of Christ, in the community also played a role in organizing the community and provided spaces for the community to meet in large groups (Wilson, 1998). The other organizations that formed were more social in nature. One example was the men's group with an auxiliary women's group the Hamiltonians and Hamiltonettes respectively hosted social and charitable events for the adults in the neighborhood. The adults also organized and led groups to benefit the children in the community such as the Boy Scouts, Parent-Teacher Association, Band Parents, and the Dad's Club. These organizations would be critical to organizing and fundraising at the community school.

Educating for Academics and Life

Generally, community members young and senior spoke of the community with great pride and the center of the pride is the Hamilton Park School. Hamilton Park School was a segregated African American school that opened in 1955 for the Hamilton Park community post *Brown v. Board of Education* and nine months before *Brown II*. The North Dallas Hamilton Park School would be annexed into the Richardson Independent School District (RISD). RISD was once a rural community that blossomed into a predominately European American suburb. The Hamilton Park community was dedicated in 1953 and in 1954 RISD quickly voiced its opposition to the Hamilton Park

School and immediately requested the school's transfer to the Dallas Independent School district (DISD) (Wilson, 1998). Amidst the turmoil the Hamilton Park School became the center of the community not just physically, but it united the community around a common goal-educating the future generation. Adults in the community without children participated in school activities as a show of solidarity and support. The community school was a powerful force that impacted the adults and children in the community. Hamilton Park School principal and resident James Griffin stated, " The community was basically a well-educated community. We had doctors, lawyers, businessmen, real estate agents, and other kinds of businesses located in the community. As a result, their children were inspired to reach for the sky" (Griffin, interviewed by Wilson 1987). The school was a kindergarten through senior high school; it was built to accommodate the families moving into the new neighborhood. The building of the school was much like the rest of the Hamilton Park development in its challenges and triumphs.

Richardson Independent School District (RISD) had provided education to a small population of African American farm families at the Anderson Bonner School (Bonner 63 years old-community historian; Wilson, 1998; archival documents). The Anderson Bonner School was a small frame house for elementary aged children. According to a Bonner family descendent, the school lacked equipment and did not have indoor plumbing and many other amenities that were basic for European American schools. The junior and senior high school students from Anderson Bonner School were sent to DISD's Booker T. Washington High School. With the development of the Hamilton Park community, Richardson Independent School District was being mandated to build a

school that was appropriate for the new African American subdivision. The effort required the district to sell bonds and increase the property taxes to pay for the new school. The wealthy elite men that were instrumental in the development of the Hamilton Park community and many of residents of the community believed the school was an excellent example of separate but equal. The Hamilton Park School was a larger school than the Anderson Bonner School and provided employment to teachers and administrator from all over the state (Starks, 1991-Wilson Interview). The Anderson Bonner School had a staff of 16 including the principal and custodial staff. Hamilton Park employed 55 teachers and administrators not including the custodial staff (Wilson, 1998). According to Wilson (1988), the Hamilton Park community and RISD understood the *Brown* decision as a genuine attempt at separate but equal not a decision to integrate. The new residents of Hamilton Park would not dare scoff at a brand new school in a brand new neighborhood; it quickly became an institution of scholarship and sports. The parents wanted the best for their children so there was some discord among the administration and parents regarding equipment and materials. The parents were aware they were receiving used books from other schools in the district. However, they understood the limitations and realities of separate but equal, so ultimately they were a united community of parents, teachers, and administrators committed to educating their children. Most of the teachers and administrators lived in Hamilton Park and developed intimate relationships with the parents and students. Former principal Griffin remembered how invested the faculty was in student success " The faculty we had at that time had come through adversity as youngsters, and we wanted our kids to have more, so

we gave our very best to lead them educationally. We think that they [students] got some kind of incentive from us and also from their parents—basically, their parents--and we worked together as a unit" (Griffin, 1987-Wilson Interview).

By all accounts the teachers were not just educating for academics sake but they were educating for life. They wanted students to be prepared for a life-career, raising a family, etc. Vivian Starks, a long time teacher and counselor at the school, was known as a nurturing disciplinarian. She taught junior and senior English. She stated that if a student was not doing their work she would tell them she would stop by their house if they did not bring their "lesson" to school complete (Starks, 1991). Additionally, according to her former student W. Bonner (63 years old) she protected the students, "one of the kids in school was making fun of me because we couldn't afford a phone" and Ms. Starks said in front of the class that "his family owned the land that many of your houses and this school sits on so he isn't the one that is poor" (Bonner 63 years old- community historian). Bonner went on to say that she was more than a teacher she really wanted them to be successful adults so she talked to them about life and making it in the world. The teachers were mentoring students in real ways before mentoring became a popular school practice for students who were deemed in need or in some way disadvantaged. James (59 years old) remembers his interactions with teachers

> I had mentors who impacted my life that has come to me in retrospect...educators who thought I needed some extra mentoring were there. I remember two teachers … one would take me to the football games. I began going to Hamilton Park elementary in the 3rd grade and my 3rd grade teacher was a member of my mother's church Ms. Keaton is the Elementary school teacher who had the most positive influence on me.

In the Hamilton Park School the students were protected and cared for by the staff. Payton in an interview with Wilson said, "Here we were shielded from racism." While Payton was a part of the generation that experienced the first class of students being bused from the neighborhood school younger generations did not escape the effects of racism in integrated schools. Steven (33 years old) spoke of his Hamilton Park School experience and stated, "Elementary was freedom it wasn't nothing racial. Once you went to next level it was like categories it was like they had a tag on every individual that is how I perceived it."

Generations of students those that graduated from high school in 1971 to those that graduated high school in 2006 recall their teachers at Hamilton Park School having high expectations for them and preparing them for higher education. The teachers encouraged the students to be the best they could be by fostering self-esteem and confidence. Early residents like Theresa Patrick recalls, "the teachers behaved as though they were out to prove that we're good and that we were capable" (Patrick, 1990-Wilson interview). The teachers wanted them to imagine careers beyond the traditional African American careers of the era. "We were protected the teachers knew us and understood us", McCall reminisces of his days at Hamilton Park School (McCall 41 years old). Additionally, Mrs. Garnett recalls a student who was preparing for graduation but had not completed her English assignment he thought he was an exception because he was an athlete. On the day of the baccalaureate service she pulled him out of line and would not allow him to participate. He completed his assignment before graduation (Garnett,1990-

Wilson Interview). The teachers made sure the students were doing their best until the very end.

The parents did not always agree with the administrators, but they trusted them to do the best for their children. The administrators were members of the community they were at church and other community activities. The principals, teachers, parents, and other school staff and volunteers were the community. Everyone had a stake in the success of the students. The early Hamilton Park School graduates until 1969 had a high percentage of students attending and graduating from college. According to Wilson (1998) between 1964-66 sixty two to eighty three percent of the graduates attended college.

The community supported the students academically and supported the students' extra-curricular activities. Teachers, administrators, parents and non-parents went to football games and participated in school fundraisers. The parents formed various organizations to help the students succeed and to fundraise. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) was the primary vehicle for parents to organize to raise concerns and money to support the school. The PTA operated a school store, sponsored college nights, granted scholarships to graduating seniors, assisted in classrooms and with field trips (Wilson, 1998). The Parent Teacher Association was primarily made up of moms, so the fathers formed their own organization. The Hamilton Park School Dad's club served as a booster club. The Dad's club hosted a "tremendous carnival" in the spring and in the fall a "snowy scene like the midway at the fair" (Wilson, 1998; Gee transcript). Further, the

band parents raised money to purchase band uniforms and pay for band trips (Robertson, 1991-Wilson interview).

The parents were able to get things done at the school recalled former principal Griffin, "Hamilton Park community was complaining about it (not having a track and field for students) the district could have refused to build the track, but Dr. Pearce ordered it done, and it was done-I mean quickly. I'd been trying to get one for years!" (Griffin,1991-Wilson interview). The parents' determination to provide the best education for their students was clear and deliberate which was apparent in their discussion regarding desegregation. The parents understood that "separate but equal" was just a hope so they did what they could to work within their segregated confinements. The parents focused on improving the school facility the school experienced major expansions from 1955-1963; they were not concerned with desegregating the school (case file 512F.2d 896; Wilson, 1998).

"A Change Gonna Come"

However, desegregation was happening whether they wanted it to or not. The year the school opened, *Brown v. Board of Education II* declared local schools responsible for implementing plans to integrate schools; those schools that did not have a success plan for integration would remain under the court's jurisdiction until a plan was fully implemented. The Dallas Independent School District remained under court supervision until 2008. This need to supervise underscores the difficulties of integration in Dallas County and its surrounding school districts. The Dallas Independent School district is lauded as having one of the more peaceful integration plans however, this

peaceful plan took thirty years to implement. Further, it could be questioned whether the integration plan changed the demographics of the district or the demographic shift can be explained by the natural growth of the city overtime.

Resistant to desegregation in 1956, the Governor of Texas sent Texas Rangers to a school district in Ft. Worth to protect an angry mob that was protesting the enrollment of three children in a local school (Handbook of Texas, retrieved June 2012). The leadership in Texas, similar to other states, believed that Texas should resist desegregation. Texas was forceful in its resistance to desegregation, and major metropolitan area of Dallas led the resistance. One of the largest integration efforts in Dallas at the time happened in 1961 when eighteen students integrated into a local all European American high school (Handbook of Texas, retrieved June 2012). The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, meanwhile without consideration of what was happening nationally, Dallas opened its third segregated high school for African Americans in 1964. After pressure from the federal government, the Richardson Independent School District In 1965 adopted a geographic zoning plan. The plan made Hamilton Park School its own school zone (case file 512F.2d 896). At the time, the zone (neighborhood) was 100% African American. Nationally, in 1966 the Health, Education, and Welfare Department established guidelines for integration. President Johnson insisted on the enforcement of desegregation in 1969, the Department of Justice sued the State of Texas. As a result, 145 schools integrated. The Hamilton Park School was forced to desegregate. However, the process of desegregation meant a huge change for the students and parents in the community.

Equal Access

Desegregation was essentially African American children being bused from their neighborhood school to the European American schools. Desegregation was based on the premise that African American students would attend "better" schools with more resources-equipment, books, etc. therefore, improving educational opportunities for African American students. The Hamilton Park Community organizations- both the Civic League and Inter-organizational Council were involved in the desegregation struggle. Initially, the district wanted to close the K-12 all black Hamilton Park School. However, the community fought against the closure (archival documents). The European American parents in the district refused to send their students to Hamilton Park School because they feared for their students' safety (C.Smith,1991 and Akins,1991 Wilson interviews). The African American Hamilton Park parents had the same concerns, fearing for the safety of their children who would be sent into what might be a hostile environment. Further, the families of Hamilton Park were opposed to putting their small children on buses to travel across town to school. However, understood they did not have the power to fight against the European American district administrators. The district and community reached a compromise, closing the Hamilton Park high school in 1969 and Hamilton Park junior high in 1970 keeping the elementary school in tact and segregated. Additionally, one European American teacher was hired at Hamilton Park School. Hamilton Park School became Hamilton Park Elementary School. Approximately 235 students were split up and sent to 2 separate high schools and junior

high schools. Students were separated and instantly became the only African American or one of two African Americans in their classrooms.

> Well... from middle school to high school my transition was very difficult...probably one of the most difficult times in my life adolescent life...my class was the first class of high school students to integrate from HP to one of the RISD high schools at that time it was LH High or RS High and subsequently BK High, but my freshman year when we went to school (James, 59 years old)

Theresa Patrick interviewed by Wilson in 1990 described how the African American students were being "jumped" by European American students. Many of the Hamilton Park School students recall African American students being beaten up by the European American students with no intervention from teachers or administrators at their new schools. Additionally, there were incidents in which European American teachers slapped or abused African American students. The former Hamilton Park students recalled the teachers received little to no repercussion for such actions. Barry (61 years old) describes the transition to the integrated schools as "different"

> Huh…yeah…it was real different going to the White school. The teachers were different. My mom was a teacher at Hamilton Park, so I always did well in school but when we went to school them I got in trouble. Yeah that was the first time I ever got in trouble at school.

The *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision gave students equal access to better equipment, current books, and more school resources; however it could be argued that *Brown vs. Board of Education* provided unequal access to capital -cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Scholars have argued that capital has a significant impact on academic achievement (Yosso, 2005; Harris & Scott, 2010). Relationships between students and teachers disappeared and perhaps a more detrimental loss was that

of the parent-teacher relationship. In the Hamilton Park community parents, teachers, and administrators were neighborhoods, they went to church together and belonged to the same organization. When students struggled the teachers could call or stop by the parents home and they knew the issue would be resolved. Parents understood that the teachers had their children's best interest at heart. In the new school environments children encountered hate crimes, abuse, and expulsions.

The Pacesetter Program

In 1975, for maintaining segregated schools the Richardson Independent School District was sued by the federal government. The suit claimed that as of April 1974 the district had 32,319 students only 1,069 of those students were African American approximately 3% of the total student population. Hamilton Park Elementary School educated 71% of the district's African American elementary student population (case file 512F.2d 896). At the time, the district had 25 elementary schools including Hamilton Park School. All of the other 24 schools were all European American or majority European American students. The district was accused of maintaining segregated schools and was mandated to integrate Hamilton Park elementary by school the 1975-1976 years. The court insisted that European American students integrate into Hamilton Park School as the African American students and parents were burdened with integrating into European American schools for the last ten years. The district believed European American parents would not send their students to Hamilton Park School. Therefore, the district converted Hamilton Park School into a magnet program to attract European American parents and students.

The program was named the Pacesetter Program because it would set the pace for elementary school education in the district. The pacesetter magnet programs required teachers to have a master's degrees, it would implement a challenging and innovative curriculum, and maintain enriching after school programs. During an interview with Wilson the Attorney for RISD stated, "this program is not designed for the community not for the black kids"(Akin,1991-Wilson interview). Further, he said the district was worried that they would not be able to meet the required number of European American students, the district was worried they would not have enough parents volunteer to send/bring their children to Hamilton Park. To their surprise parents volunteered, and in the fall of 1975 Hamilton Park School was integrated. In the court arrangement the student population of Hamilton Park was 51% African American and 50% European American (Akin,1991-Wilson interview). McCall (41 years olds) remembers the change at Hamilton Park School

> Earliest childhood memory 1st grade mainly what I remember when our schools were segregated mostly all black we didn't have white girls and boys when they bused in it was a major change… it was integrated but we weren't used to it getting along that is where problems came along with fights it was hard for kids who were already going to adapt-no one talked to us about it we were not warned.

The parents in the community were not thrilled with the changes at the school either. Ms. Gee known in the community as a historian in her interview with Wilson explained how the demographics of the teachers changed too, there were more European American teachers, European American teachers became the majority at Hamilton Park School. Ms. Gee remembers it being an adjustment for the students and the community. The district's requirement of a master's degree displaced some of the African American teachers at

Hamilton Park School. Ms. Gee believed that students lost their role models. Teachers that would encourage them to be their best selves. Teachers that would motivate them and help them understand they could be whatever they wanted to be if they worked hard.

Currently, not all African American school aged children who live in Hamilton Park are able to attend the neighborhood school. The school has become so popular that many of the neighborhood children are placed on a waiting list. Some community members said children are placed on the waiting list when they are one or two years old in the hope that when it is time for them to start school they will be able to go the neighborhood school. At the beginning of the 2012 academic year the demographics for Hamilton Park School were as follows: 38.7% African American, 29.1% European American, 25.1% Latino, 3.9% Asian American, and 3.2% Bi-racial. Further, the students at Hamilton Park School perform well on state standardized test with the majority of the student population passing the tests: 92% in reading, 93% in math, 98% in math, and 96% in science (RISD, 2013). The school also boasts numerous community awards and innovative programs such as Artfest, a webpage team, science labs for grades 1-6, grade level community service projects, and chess club.

The younger formerly incarcerated African American men I interviewed felt that Hamilton Park School was nurturing, and the diversity of other cultures important to their growth, and a fun place to be with close friends.

> Best thing about growing up here and going to Hamilton Park is going to school with people that you are familiar with and most of the teachers even though it was interracial. It was fun going to school with people that you grew up with and then you learn that they bus other people there and it was fun to be able to mingle with other cultures and learn things I learned during those years in elementary about

> Hanukah-Jewish holidays and a few other things Buddhist Muslim. It gave you-sort of what to except in life it was good (Conner 32 years old).
>
> Todd (34 years old) said, Elementary was good. Hamilton Park I loved that elementary we did a lot of stuff. We went to Panchos we had all kinds of good trips- camping. Well if you got good behavior you got tickets and so when collect so many tickets you can buy whatever and I had saved up all my tickets to the end of the year so me and uh me and another student we had enough tickets so she took us sailboat riding.
>
> Blake (42 years old) said, Wonderful. From, when I was going to school out there in South Dallas, Dunbar elementary before I came out here it was about the same the quality of teachers about the same but when I got out here to Hamilton park it was- I really enjoyed myself. It gave me a spark for learning at the beginning stages of my life. I liked it very much.

By all accounts Hamilton Park School has remained a "good" school, although it has changed over time and some issues are now more readily identified. Now that researchers and administrators are attuned to and quantifying issues of race in schools, issues like overrepresentation in special education are more quickly noted. A teacher's aide at Hamilton Park School and graduate of the school claimed that African American students were overrepresented in special education. She also stated that student's from Hamilton Park were less prepared for school because parents were less involved (Hanks, 62 years old). The teacher-parent relationships have changed as well. The close bonds that parents shared in the 1950's have all but disappeared. As Ms. Sherman (82 years old), a long time resident of Hamilton Park stated: "schools are different-these kids know too much." I understood that to mean that parents in the 1950's were not preparing their children to be "reading ready" before kindergarten. Parents were responsible for making sure they were able to use the restroom and behave in class.

The War on Drugs

Drugs became a growing problem in the neighborhood in late 80's early 90's. Some of the older residents had passed away and their children sold the properties. The residents said it was an influx of "strangers" and the younger generations were getting involved in drugs-"they don't have the same spirit the kids had in 1950's" (Gee in Dallas Morning News, archival documents). The influx of drugs led the community to begin to fight back against the growing drug problem. McCall (41 years old) stated that the community really began to change.

> To be honest and true CRACK when it was introduced to the streets not in our generation, but in the generation that came after us. Cause their fathers and mothers uncles aunt were hooked on crack. They never got a chance to raise their kids because of drugs once their kids got older which is the generation now that is all they knew Late 80's early 90's when the epidemic hit real hard in this neighborhood. Whether you were dealing or using it still became an epidemic-dealing just as worse as using.

The older residents said there were increases in burglaries in the neighborhood. Conner (33 years old) said the community changed because of influx of drugs and a different "code" among younger members of the community.

> Back in the day you could leave your doors unlocked. You leave your house unlocked now they be done moved you out like the repo man came through like you Rent-a-Center. Everything they give you they take with no notice or nothing. As far as change, the change is a lot of people have moved away and a lot of people have moved in. Some of the people we grew up with they passed their house down, but now people are renting houses and we didn't really have that –I mean some people rented houses then, but those people stayed here (I remember someone living in the house near my grandmother for over 25 years-they were renters) It is shocking and from 1993-1997 I stayed in Port Author and when I would come back on spring break and summer you could see the change. As we were getting older it wasn't like the community unity we had when we were young. Everybody doing their own thing people split ways. Older groups regardless if they went separate ways they always came together it was positive things not stupid things. The generations under us come to together more on stupid things the generation before them played a certain role cause we weren't allowed to do certain things around here we would get beat up

> for it or disciplined for it but now you whoop a kid now and they mama come around and you get into a whole total fight. Generations changed it wasn't the same grandma grandpa atmosphere- where ever you mess up that is where you get it at –it is nothing like that now.

Howard (Dallas Morning News (N/D)- Blackmon archival documents) stated, the community hoped the anti-drug rally with more than 200 marching in the neighborhood along with community programs would help with the drug problem. The residents were determined to help the youth in community, but the drug problem was overwhelming and over years changed the feel and appearance of the neighborhood. In a 1991 interview conducted by Wilson a resident stated that a real estate agent said Hamilton Park Community would rot from within. The community is a different place, many of the houses are boarded up and some are trap or drug houses, but right around a corner you find a perfectly maintained home with a well-groomed yard a reflection of the old Hamilton Park. If nothing else, the community is resilient. It remains a place that people speak of with pride. Conner (33 years old) said,

> Cause a lot of people if they like don't really stay in Hamilton Park they don't understand the pride that we had behind the neighborhood. It was really pride in the neighborhood because you could be in China and they go where you from (you say) I'm from Dallas I mean we might say that but then what part of Dallas and you'd be like Hamilton Park

The pride of the neighborhood is directly connected to the school. Many of the former students of Hamilton Park from the early years 1950-1970's have class reunions. These reunions are not celebrated with the students from the local high schools from which they graduated, but are celebration of students who would have graduated together if Hamilton Park School had remained a K-12 institution. The connection to the community remains

strong. While I was driving in the neighborhood with McCall (41years old) we saw a car turning around in the middle of the street. As we approached the car we discovered an elderly gentleman who appeared disoriented. We approached the car and asked him where he was going and he said he was going to a house that was four houses from where we were, but he was unsure how to get there. He stated he was "lost." As we prepared to assist the elderly gentleman another woman drove up that knew McCall and the elderly gentleman. She told McCall to drive the gentleman's car home. He felt more comfortable with her driving the elderly gentleman because she knew him and he would drive her car. As I followed both cars to the gentleman's house I thought that maybe the sprit of community and unity is still here. Perhaps it was not as strong as it had been in the past, but in that moment I saw a glimpse of the old community that I had been hearing about from those I had interviewed. In one home I visited, I noticed a flyer from one of the oldest community organizations the Inter-Organizational Council, about voter registration and elections. I also recalled that in one interview, a resident mentioned that the Civic League (the first organization formed in the community) continued to work on community buy-outs. Growing businesses and sprawling highways surround the Hamilton Park community, during the mid-1980's many of the residents sold their properties for approximately $100,00 (archival data-Dallas Morning News, ND). In 1985, a developer proposed a buy-out of all of the residential properties in Hamilton Park. The developer offered $35 a square foot. The smallest lots in the community would have sold for $250,000. In the 1950's these homes were approximately $9,000. Due to the failing oil patch boom and the fall of Texas real estate values the deal fell through (Wilson,

1998). Since then there have been four or five serious offers to purchase the community, each time the deal has fallen through for a variety of reasons including that many of the residents believe the property is worth more than what developers typically offer. There are "new" people in the community, but like myself many of the men I interviewed still had family living in the neighborhood. I lived in Hamilton Park from birth until 3 years old, one semester of 5th grade and then from 7-12th grade. I didn't attend Hamilton Park School, but I feel connected to the community. During my research, I heard that there were rumors spreading in this tight-knot community that "one of the home-girls was working on her PhD and to go ahead and talk to her." I was inspired by my family, friends, and home-boys that connected me to formerly incarcerated men and for the men's willingness to allow me to hear their stories. Hamilton Park influenced the person I have become as it has influenced the men in the study. Their stories of self are connected to the collective community.

Chapter 5: Constructing a Pipeline

"College pathways," "school to college," and "career and college ready" are phrases that capture our idyllic notion of K-12 students' educational development and trajectory. While our ideas may be broad enough to include the joys of childhood, adolescent challenges, high school tracks, the GED or high school graduation, and then college or career, they do not typically include incarceration as a step along the educational continuum. The life stories of twelve formerly incarcerated African American men from Hamilton Park illuminate an alternative well-travelled and knowable path. Instead of school to career or college, their stories reflect the school to prison track. The case of the African American men from Hamilton Park is especially revealing in that these men were not from low-socioeconomic-urban-resource deprived schools, as is often associated with the school to prison pipeline (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Farmer, 2010; Dunbar, & Villarruel, 2002; Skiba, et al. 2002). Rather, these men matriculated in affluent, suburban, sufficiently resourced schools. Idyllic representations of college and career possibilities aside, the classroom, the school disciplinary system, the juvenile justice system and the larger criminal justice system together facilitated entry into the pipeline for some, and later helped ensure that they would stay in the criminal justice system.

This chapter describes the school-to-prison path from the perspective of twelve formerly incarcerated African American men. Of the 12 men, 3 men started 1st grade between 1958-1960, 3 men from 1977-1979, 4 men from 1983-1986, and 2 men from

1991-1994. In ten instances men transitioned from high school to prison, and in two cases transitioned from college to prison. Articulating the men's stories with the structural framework of our schools, justice system, and policy documents illuminate that rather than protect African American males from the justice system, our educational system hastened their entry into the criminal justice system. In many cases it also supported their ongoing participation. Analyses show that the school-to-prison pipeline is a well-established path with nameable parts.

For these men there were discernable steps towards incarceration: the joy of elementary school; middle or high school decline; and high school chaos: leaving school; entering the game; and being on paper. Of the twelve men interviewed, three men were members of the first class to integrate into European American high schools in 1970.

The Integration Generation

The men who experienced integration described a high school decline versus a middle school decline. All of the men performed well academically at Hamilton Park School. However, in the integration generation, two of the men described how their grades declined, they were disciplined at school for the first time, and how their discipline became frequent over time. Corresponding with integration, students remembered a police presence on the school grounds for the first time in their academic careers. Increasing disconnection from the academic environment led to them dropping out of school a year or so later.

The stories of the men were complicated by their individual life stories, but were nevertheless eerily similar collectively. In every story there is beauty, power, happiness, ugliness, extended moments of powerlessness, and sadness. In each story I felt a sense of

hope that seemed to be rooted in culture and community. James and Carl were co-defendants, but their lives took different paths. James and Barry have not returned to prison since their initial incarceration in the 1970's, but Carl has been in and out of prison for the last 39 years and remains "on paper" which is being on parole or probation. The men in the younger generation served anywhere from 1 year to 16 years. A few of the men have been incarcerated more than once. Only one man from the younger generation has been in and out of prison for 13 years. Most of the men after serving time in prison served another 5 or more years "on paper."

James, Carl, and Barry (ages 59, 60, and 61) described childhoods in two-parent homes in a great neighborhood. They remained at Hamilton Park School until high school. They had fond memories of Hamilton Park School during their elementary school years. James stated,

> I remember two teachers. I begin going to Hamilton Park elementary in the 3rd grade and my 3rd teacher who is a member of my mother's church Ms. Keaton was an Elementary school teacher who had the most positive influence on me.

James also had an aunt who worked at Hamilton Park Elementary as a counselor and math teacher. While he may not have recognized the influence of social capital in his school environment, having a family member in the school environment has a positive influence on children. Barry's mother was an employee at Hamilton Park School:

> The teachers were friendly, but they taught you well. My mother was a teacher and taught history…about 20 years or something. Cause she started, I mean, when I was going she was teaching there. All the way 'til they shut it down. In 1970 they divided Hamilton Park and half of us had to go to Richardson and half Lake Highlands.
>
> Yeah, I mean I had you know fond memories of a lot of teachers mainly my second grade teacher Mrs. Price she was nice and polite and she smelled good. She was

> really…really you know the best teacher I always liked Mrs. Price. She was my second grade teacher.
>
> I remember all of them. You know the classrooms and stuff…Mrs. Price she was just so encouraging. You know if you do things good she was really encouraging.

Carl, who described himself as very smart, skipped grades twice during his educational career. He described his experience when he attended a private school during kindergarten,

> I went to St. Paul's for kindergarten, but I set that muthafucka' on fire. So they kicked me out of that muthafucka'. I guess I hated them fuckin' nuns. The bell tower me and some muthafucka' named Kenny set that muthafucka' on fire. Every time I did something they put me in a trash can they'd make me stand in a trash can and when everybody came from lunch I would stand in the trash while everyone dumped their trash on me. You know what I mean, so once I said fuck it and we went to the bell tower and set that muthafucka' on fire fuck St. Paul kindergarten!

After this act of resistance, his parents transferred him to Hamilton Park School where he took accelerated classes and was promoted twice between 1st grade and 8th grade. As he remembered Hamilton Park School he stated, "I had fun… I had fun."

Unlike the previous generation, the younger generations attended Hamilton Park School from Kindergarten through sixth grade. In general, their experiences were happy and uncomplicated by race. Of the younger generation, four are now working and/or going to school, the remainder are involved in the drug trade or some other illegal activity. Andrew (46 years old-formerly incarcerated at 26 years old) said,

> When I went to school (Hamilton Park), first through the third grade it was pretty much a Black school… it was all Black. And you kind of saw a lot of history that was going on and you know it was noted that they were (African American students at Hamilton Park) were excelling in all areas.

Todd (34) expressed his experiences at Hamilton with excitement in his voice he said, "I remember going camping, but the sailboat ride was the best." He also stated,

> Elementary was good. Hamilton Park I loved that elementary we did a lot of stuff. We went to Panchos restaurant we had all kinds of good trips. Camping, uh recess…recess everything…the field trips. They had all kinds of field trips and sports and recess and everything. Teachers was good too. There was some good teachers up there.

Most of the men had similar sentiments regarding the teachers as positive and supportive. "Teachers that did their thang, I think I the teachers up there were good…the things they used to do, it all makes sense now" (Timothy, 24 years old). Further Steven (34) said, "she just was like…this is what is you gone do…Ms. Milkaroy and Ms. Timples-those were strong black ladies."

Constructing the School to Prison Pipeline

When the men transitioned from Hamilton Park School into different junior high schools and high schools their lives changed in significant ways. For each generation their transition was impacted by the era in which they lived. The school to prison pipeline phenomena remained invisible to policy makers and educators, even as it was being systematically and steadily constructed. Yet, it impacted four generations of African American men from Hamilton Park. The United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) began collecting suspension and expulsion data in 1968. Nationally, African American students' out of school suspensions were twice that of European American students. The notion of over-suspensions for African American males becomes evident in 1968, however we had not begun to understand and frame the school to prison pipeline phenomena in relationship to school discipline. As the men in the study suggest, integrating into the predominately European American

schools began the process of generations of men being pushed out of school with a variety of micro-aggressions that were happening in their everyday school lives as well as events like the Civil Rights Movement that highlighted the macro-aggressions that African Americans encountered nationally. Psychiatrist Chester Pierce introduced the term racial micro-aggressions in the 1970's to address everyday racism such as racial slurs, jokes, and assaults that happened to people of color. Macro-aggressions address the larger institutional and structural racism that impact people of color.

The social unrest of the 1970's provided the backdrop for James, Carl, and Barry's transition from Hamilton Park School to integrated schools. James describes the transition as a troubled one:

> From middle school to high school my transition was very difficult...probably one of the most difficult times in my life adolescent life. My class was the first class of high school students to integrate from Hamilton Park to one of the RISD high schools at that time it was Lake Highlands High or Richardson High and subsequently Berkner High. But my freshman year when we went to Richardson high well, that was a transition I did not handle well. And it was the turning point that eventually...would be the impotence of my headed in the wrong direction. In terms of getting into legal problems, becoming a juvenile delinquent, hum.. that is when I began to fall behind academically.
>
> Just taking a young man like me...for me...there were only a small percentage of us who were unable to adjust on a larger scale most of the students adjusted and did well but for the biggest thing was having been in a classroom with all African Americans people students children being in school with all African American people than transitioning from a classroom of 13-14 classroom that was much smaller with a very involved teacher to a classroom of huh of maybe 30-40 Europeans and if I am recalling correctly I am have had one or two classes were I was the only one...the only African American in the class my sophomore year...so going from being in class were I had a class full of friends to being in a class where full of strangers that I was not...huh..connected with in any way really...so that was the biggest impact for me and I didn't adjust to that well at all and hummm...looking back I see it more clearly but then I didn't understand what was going on but academically I went downhill from there... that is when I began to fail classes skip school that's one thing

With the macro-aggression of integration and the micro-aggressions of everyday racism in schools they felt that school was not a space for success. Barry said,

> Uh, I mean it was bad. It was…thangs just what nuh same you know its like fo' one thang, Richardson it only be about three blacks in the class you know, the rest, and you know, [at Hamilton Park] we could sit anywhere we want to, but the teacher [at integrated school]wanted to assign you "you sit here and you sit." And they always had the blacks spaced out and they didn't want to change you. We were the better athletes - football but they still wanted a white starting quarterback for Richardson… ain't gonna start especially a Black quarterback. Dude could throw the ball way further than this White but ah naw. I mean, it was a radical change but suddenly you start don't even really want to go (to school). And basketball I quit I said I wasn't gonna play. Man, only one dude in our class, Shawn Jones, stayed right across the street, played cause he was real good. You know the coach liked him cause he could shoot, but that was only one who made the team.
>
> I remember we was at a woodshop class and we had to build stools. I know I got mine perfect cause I showed two white dudes how to do it. I was looking I said what? He said" Mr. Smith the stool is not right" and I said what's matter with it? I said pick that up put that down "I don't have to put it I'm the teacher" you sho' right you the teacher. I was so, so pissed off, behind this, we had a football game at Richardson I would just pass by the wood shop and he said he couldn't stand my stool so ain't nobody gonna have no stool. I got some gasoline and I just burned all the stools and they come and I said what you gonna do now? You gonna get some more wood? We gonna make some more stools? But I know we couldn't. We only had about a week left.
>
> I start making, making C's and I never did (before integration). I always pass when we had to do a paper. And man I'm gonna go and get on this and stuff and this girl she thought she was so much smarted she used to want me to, she say "look at mine I'll help you" and I said I would show her my paper. We did another paper and I made a 96 and I beat her on it and the teachers they was like" Mr. Smith that was a very good paper".

Barry said the teachers did not expect African American students to perform well academically or to be smart. Furthermore, he said their work was routinely questioned for accuracy and when their work was good they were asked if they had done it themselves. Carl, who was younger than his classmates because he had been promoted to

a higher grade, describes the transition as looking at things through different eyes. Carl describes his transition to the integrated school as difficult because he wanted it to be difficult. He said that he and his friends were looking for an excuse to mess up.

> I think it was Hamilton Park 10th grade got split up some people went to Lake Highlands High School some went to Richardson High School that is when it got real interesting. Cause we had to see through a different sets of eyes… shit White boys White girls. If you look back on Hamilton Park then we only had to deal with one another and now we are in a different environment totally. The first fuckin' day I got expelled. I slapped the shit out of a mutha fucka' the very first fuckin' day and then they wouldn't let me back in school so I start just skipping until shit my pop find out and then he kicked a field goal with my muthafuckin' ass so then I had to go back to school and tried sports, but I didn't want to cut my hair because I had an afro so fuck them and then I was seeing this white girl Susie Fae...fuck them.

While Carl argued that he and his friends were responsible for making their transition difficult his memory of his first day suggests otherwise. He described an environment where skin color became the first priority. Carl and some of the other men illuminate Du Bois's notion of "double consciousness" (p.3). When they integrated they found themselves examining themselves through the eyes of the "white boys and girls." Du Bois (1903) ironically described this process by writing that the "the shades of the prison-house closed round about us all" (p.3).

Transitioning into the larger predominately European American Schools was fraught with challenges not only for the integration generation of men, but for the generations that followed. McCall (41) described how teachers were different in middle school and how, in high school, he was kicked off the football team because of the young men he associated with. Being dismissed from the team pushed McCall "into the streets" and out of school.

> Teachers in middle school more or less I could see not at as far as hatred, but not believing in you as a student and acting like you ain't gone be nothing. Then if you don't this you cant do this you want to be a football player, but if that doesn't happen then what are you going to do and that is correct but at the same time it is like they were tearing you down. Saying you couldn't do this or that-you can do anything you put your mind to it but it was a certain way they would say it
>
> Let me see if I can remember correctly I was told was being put out of athletics –it was a course a class at this point. And at the time it was like the off season so at first so it really didn't dawn on me so I was thinking when school starts back I will be in athletics it will be cool. When I was put out that was my guess that was their way of putting me off the team so I never asked I think I talked to the coach one time and what I remember him telling me was that they had a meeting and I was being put off the team. And I was like how do you have a meeting without me you know what I'm saying how can you have a meeting about me without me…without me knowing anything after I did that it was like a slap to the face

Steven (34) felt prepared academically to transition to junior high school, but he perceived a difference in how teachers responded to African American students based on race.

> The way they (Hamilton Park School) set you up to go forth-you have to have credits so on and so from there you know the requirements. Played football, basketball… I stopped playing when I seen the racial stuff. These kids are probably in the booster club. You are only to work they just put us (African American players) in to work -they were working us like mules. (the racial differences) hum in 7th grade were in the classroom too like it was a competition who was the smartest…people got treated differently based on how "smart" they were. Teachers encouraged you…so few and far between

Timothy (24), sang the praises of his elementary school teachers at Hamilton Park. However in the case of junior and high school he declared, "I had some fucked up teachers."

Across interviews, the men felt that racism played a role in their everyday interactions with teachers and school officials. Some researchers have connected the instances of racial harm to systems of power, while others refuse to acknowledge the

systematic nature of racial aggressions. Skiba and Losen (2010) have contributed a great deal to our understanding of the school to prison pipeline phenomena. However, when large-scale reports such as Suspended Education (2010) use phrases like "raise difficult questions as to what may cause race/gender disparities" or "possibility of biases" it avoids what some might see as obvious conclusions. Popular media supports the avoidance even when the statistics provide evidence of a systematic problem.

> The extreme disparities along racial and gender lines - especially the pronounced differences for Black males - also raise difficult questions as to what may cause these race/gender disparities. Although we did not perform a regression analysis, it seems unlikely that poverty could sufficiently explain the gender and racial differences in these current data (p.8).
>
> …raise important questions about both the condition of education in our urban middle schools and the possibility of conscious or unconscious racial and gender biases at the school level (p.8).
>
> What we really need to do is go in to those districts and see if these really are choices being made," Mr. Skiba said. "We don't really know enough about the reasons for African-American and Latino over-representation in school discipline. We have enough data to show that it's more than just poverty and any greater misbehavior. My guess is it's very subtle interactional effects between some teachers and students (Schawrz, New York Times, 2010).

These quotes portray the writer's myopia, ignoring generations of historical knowledge, and demonstrate how documents can avoid conclusions that would acknowledge systems of power. Meanwhile, students' such as the men in my study are consistently transformed from student to prisoner.

Many of the men who attended Hamilton Park School were suspended or expelled for the first time when they were integrated into European American schools. Barry (61) described his first suspension incident,

> And they still, you not gonna, you know first time ever I got expelled, you know it was a white girl. She was nice; she had long hair. You know I never really messed with her and it was hanging on my desk it wasn't nuthin' we was cool and her hair was hanging on my desk and I was just looking at it and touched it and the teacher saw me and she saw me and said" Barry why you pulling on her hair?!" and I said I'm not pulling I'm just looking at it. "You go to the principal's office." And…and she told them I wasn't pulling on it and I mean it…it wasn't… I mean that was when everything started going bad; I didn't like school.

Andrew (46) says,

> I got suspended one time for fighting you know. It got pretty brutal after that Yeah, in fact I had broken my ankles and these guys were picking on me and I had a stick I brought from home that my dad made and I pulled it out on a couple of guys and I just went off and I got suspended for like 17 days and it was during Easter break. I think we were out of school for a couple of days during that time but it hurt my grades plummeted from then… This was middle school this was in Richardson Jr. high and that's when I transferred from Richardson to Northwood…and they (grades) continued to fall after that point… after that one suspension that was it…I did not make high grades.

Scott (36) said,

> I told you at the 11th grade going into the 12th grade I dropped out of school-really I was kicked out of school and had to move of schools and had to move districts-I was kicked out for a fight so they expelled both of us.

Blake (42) stated,

> Actually, I wasn't… I was actually breaking up someone from fighting. My father always said you don't get in no fight. So I wasn't really fighting I just so happened to be there and things happened and misunderstandings and I ended up going to jail. I was in the 9th grade. Freshman…Yeah, my first time going to jail and I was breaking it up. My friend was the one that was fighting. You know I just happened to break it up and the dude he was fighting was trying to say the same thing but you know it didn't matter to them (school administrators and police). My friend was like a bully anyway. I was just at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Many of them explained that after a school fight they would be suspended or expelled and would have to transfer schools because they had a "jacket." The "jacket" meant the school and police identified them as "gang affiliated" and therefore as "dangerous." Once identified, perceived misbehavior could result in quick presumptions of guilt and harsher punishments in both the educational and justice systems. Several men explained

that they were not in a gang but fought because of their pride for the neighborhood. One of the key informants explained that maintaining good grades had no bearing on "getting a jacket" and did not protect them for being falsely identified as gang affiliated. William (27, 3rd generation Hamilton Park man) offered that, "my parents really had to fight to get everything resolved because if you were likely to be from Hamilton or had friends from Hamilton Park you were considered gang affiliated." Further,

> What I was saying even if your at the school and you come from a good family you still as far as being from Hamilton Park they would associate you or affiliate you with being in a gang I mean the school district and the police officers that work for the school district and even if you weren't involved in fights or mischievous activities or anything like that you know you would still be taken aside and taken a photo of and put into a gang file.

Frank (27) described his memory of having a jacket:

> My 11th grade when I was suppose to be a senior I wasn't in school…9th suppose to be 10th so my 10th when I finally got to 10th. I tried to go back but they wouldn't let me back in. They put a jacket on me basically they said I was gang affiliated and some more stuff they said I basically couldn't get back in Richardson school. I could go back to school just none of the schools in Richardson. I could go to school in Dallas. I am not the first person who has dealt with it so it was the superintendent-my gang affiliation was part of it and the thing with the principal-I told him I would kick his ass if he talked to my mama that way again.

As a researcher conducting interviews, I heard stories about school fights so frequently, and the stories and outcomes were so similar, that I began to question whether I was hearing about the same fight over and over. But the men who told stories of school fights were not in school at the same time and had not attended the same high schools. Steven (34) on his memory of a fight said,

> I got kicked out of Forest Meadow (junior high) cause me and some of my homeboys got into a confrontation with the people in Stults (neighborhood) and they kicked us out. It was like we were playing wall ball at school Hamilton park versus Stults and it turned into Hamilton Park versus Stults. It put me in jail. It was like the peak-the iceberg there were small fights happening…

Frank (27) stated,

> I went to Richardson junior high and Westwood junior high I got expelled…fights, tardies, and being in ISS a lot. I played football and baseball in junior high. I kept my grades up I got my work done. When I got expelled they held me back because I missed part of my exams so I couldn't make it all up.

Conner (33)

> I did… I got kicked out of school it wasn't my fault I got involved in something that's what ended up making me move to Port Arthur…some guys from the neighborhood did a few things. They beat up this guy. I didn't know nothin' about it. I came from walking a girlfriend to class and I just so happen to be walking in front of the dude when he came from being beat up and I got blamed for it so that was the only negative thing that like I say you know, but other than that my memories of middle school were very good. I had to do 8th grade over when I moved to Port Arthur because I was kicked out in March. I couldn't take no finals or nothing I couldn't even go to summer school or nothing… for a fight I wasn't even involved in. It was who I ran with…I got my school work done you know there may have been a few times that I didn't but I got it done

Timothy (24) said,

> I got into a fight and I shattered the glass of the memorial thing. I mean I had no choice because the dude was bigger than me so I threw him straight into that mug and I ended up getting in trouble for that and I ended up on probation and I had to pay for it-so they put me on paper. 2nd fight of school year-the dude was in court too I don't remember what the charge was –some foolishness shit. We didn't have the money to pay for that shit so they put a nigga on probation. I was on juvenile probation for a year-I had to check in Monday-Thursday…finished the 9th grade-the probation was at the end of the year. There was beef in the neighborhood so when school started I got into it with someone-so this time I went to jail-because they said it was gang related because some dudes from Hamilton Park got into with dudes from another neighborhood-gang related-Hamilton Park is neighborhood they (school) called it a gang.

The Zero Tolerance Generation

The men whose ages ranged from 24-35 years olds are the zero tolerance generation. While men from earlier generations discussed suspensions and expulsion from school due to school fights, none of them discussed them in the same way as the zero tolerance generation. The zero tolerance policies that govern the state of Texas were enacted in 1995 under Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code entitled Discipline and Law Order.

The chapter elevates misbehavior to criminality and solidifies the relationship between youth who enter the juvenile justice system through the educational system. The interviews with formerly incarcerated men from Hamilton Park support the statistical data from research in the last ten years. The men in community described the increase of incarceration over time. According to Losen & Skiba's report *Suspended Education* (2010), racial suspension rates have grown considerably. In the 1970's African American students were suspended at rate of about 6%. European American students were suspended at a rate of 3%. With zero tolerance polices, African American students' suspension rate increased from 6% in the 1970's to 15% in 2006. The zero tolerance polices increased suspension for all students, but European American students' suspension only increased from 3% in the 1970's to 5% in 2006. African American students are three times more likely than European American students to be suspended. The men in the zero tolerance generation were exposed to the juvenile justice system immediately. This process began to shape their identity as a "criminal." If students were engaged in fighting in school they were arrested, fined, prosecuted, jailed, and often time not allowed to return to the school. For the men of Hamilton Park having a "jacket" made this process harsher. The men's path in the justice system was harsher if they were considered to be gang affiliated. Their punishment was stiffer, and often involved costly fines and the inability to attend school at their home school or district. As the men began to approach their high school years, expulsions, suspension and being kicked out of school continued. The process of pushing men out of home district to surrounding districts often began the process of pushing men out of the educational system

completely. Overall, there was a pattern of the men dropping out of school around 10th or 11th grade. Steven (34) stated, "I got kicked out of Forest Meadow and I went to Westwood…then went to Richardson high school." Scott (36) remembered his high school trajectory and stated,

> Richardson high school…it was a challenge. I guess just being in high school and really by like 11th grade year being young and stupid. I thought the streets were more important because of the choices I made. I was kicked out for that fight with Spring Valley (neighborhood). He told my mom I had to switch district…I switched district and really didn't like the district mom chose. So, I eventually started hanging out in the streets and never went back to school…I was playing football (when kicked out). I was still a B student when I dropped out I was a B student. The streets were different I felt like the streets were more important at the time it was like I the streets didn't have no rules me growing up being a teenager and coming into my teenage years and not realizing the mistakes I made until I got older.

Keith (40) said,

> I got kicked out …went to Dallas high schools till I got through with school I dropped out it wasn't for me. I was in my right grade when I dropped out. Dallas schools have a slower curriculum than Richardson schools. I flunked 7th grade. I went to Dallas started off 7th grade second semester I was in 8th grade when that school year was over I was in the 9th grade like I was suppose to be –I went to 8th grade for a semester were most kids go to 8th grade for a whole year. I was with everybody I was in 9th grade like I was suppose to be the curriculum is slower I caught up in ½ a semester I wasn't dumb I was just doing certain things that wouldn't allow me to apply myself. I wanted to hang out instead of doing my school work I met a couple of white kids that like to hang out at pizza places instead of being home doing homework. We (African American kids) couldn't go to the mall and hang out just us we went with our parents white kids could –they would call me and say you want to go and then the next day we might leave school and go-hanging out. I got my grades up so I went to Lake Highlands High School (Home district) and got kicked out again-fighting and all type of stuff I was just so happy to be with my peers I grew up with so I wasn't applying myself. Then so it wasn't the white kids then it was my community friends-so excited being back with them I huh I wasn't applying myself… got kicked out and had to start going to Thomas Jefferson High school (Dallas district) I was there 2 months…10th grade I dropped out.

Timothy (24) said,

> I was on probation-for the 9th grade fight…it was the end of 9th grade going to 10th grade…I went to juvenile facilities for 6 days…I was looking into GED program because I didn't want to go back to school. Because I didn't want to get into it with them and I didn't want to go to jail. I knew I was going to fight and so I was doing what was best for me-(why were you in juvenile facility?)got in trouble…something minor-after I got off probation… I wouldn't going to school so I was doing my thang…I started when I was about 15 years…I was doing my thang…I haven't finished my GED…after all these years I mean I really want to get it I just need to take the test...

Frank (27) said,

> I was in 10th when I stopped…by then I wouldn't to much doing my work I was there but I wasn't there…coming home selling my drugs making my money-around 14-15 (years old) I started selling my drugs. I had time to do my homework I just didn't do it…I just wasn't interested in it at the time

There where two men that dropped out in their senior year of high school. Both men were in there 40's when I interviewed them. Byron (42) stated,

> When I got to my senior year upon getting ready to graduate, about a month before school was out, they called me to the counselor's office and told me I wouldn't be able to walk the stage because you gonna be two grades shy…because you have, huh, one or two too many unexcused absences. And I'm like what? Why would you wait until now to tell me this and you know you could have told me this in the summer. I could have picked up (a class)…but you wait until a month before school is out and tell me this and when I was told that it threw me for a loop and I said well to hell with it. I was through and its kind of strange because I quit going to school at that time. The teachers were like come on please stay you've come so far and I'm like yeah but I was let down and that kind of stuck in my head… I was just frustrated that you wait so long to tell me and even my momma was irate. That kind of led me astray and I started working and doing that stuff.

McCall (41) stated,

> I had a vision…yes a vision a plan of what I would do if it had happened the way I planned for it to happen which nothing ever goes the way you plan but hey you have to start somewhere. My 11th grade year season '88 going into my senior year that is when I was kicked off the team…I stopped going to school and went to the streets.

Conner's (33) high school experience was different because he had a year of homeschooling, but as he described his trajectory it ended with him dropping out in the 11th grade:

> I ended up going to night school. I ended up going to night school cause I had been out of school for a minute. Cause I had a car wreck so I was getting home schooled so I didn't go to school for a while and I ended up leaving… I got kicked out of school there at one point (in Port Arthur) it's a small country town and you don't have too many Blacks unless you go to Houston or Baytown whatever. A dude had on the same shirt I did, I had 15 staples in my stomach and I was barely able to make it up the stairs and the lady said I ran from her. She was a substitute teacher so you know it was real and I really got myself kicked out...cause I cussed her. I'm not lying I cussed them out good. My auntie was like you gonna get yo'self killed. Killed? Man I got 15 stitches I got a pass that says I can be late to class and this lady…I had to learn how to walk again, breathing and everything and yea so the lady said I was running I told that lady… I was like really? The principal that was in there she was the one fighting for me to get my pass because they would always write me up for coming in their late cause I not fittin' run or have people pushing when the bell rung… I got staples in my stomach and I said walking upstairs hurt and this and that so she was fighting for me to get a little pass and this and that you know and then I go in front of this lady and she talking about why you running? And I'm like why am I what? Why am I running? And I was like man I ain't doing no running the lady got me mixed up with somebody else and later on that day that same dude that had on that same shirt went to the office and I was sitting in there waiting for my auntie to come pick me up and I was like now look the lady described the shirt she didn't describe nothing else she just described the shirt. I was like hey man the dude got on the same shirt I do…couldn't it possibly be that the lady got it wrong and they were like naw she got you…she got you. Yeah they did that…I cussed them out. I almost went to jail for it but I didn't like (what they did) but they got a piece of my mind they deserved that. Home schooled all the way up until the 11th. Well up until 2nd semester and then I decided I was ready to go back to school, but dropped out

James 59 years old

> I quit for the next couple of years...I basically was non-productive in the 10th...not as conscious I never thought I am quitting I am done academically it was just that I didn't adjust I began to be in class but I wasn't really in class if I made it to class and so I began to not go to school very often so now although I didn't know it then I basically hummm quit school I was a drop out didn't know it...I never thought I am dropping out if school that wasn't it in the sense of saying ok I am done I am dropping out but I was a drop out I may have been present in class present at the school enrolled but going but I don't think and somehow...I may have just squeezed from the

> 10th grade to the 11th grade but I never made it to the 12th grade by the time I got in the 11th grade it was really over.

Constructing the school to prison pipeline can be understood as shaping identity through a series of macro-aggressions like integration and zero tolerance polices. The pipeline is constructed in part by shaping a criminal identity for young African American men and women, labeling them as "criminal," and turning their educational process into a criminal process by "giving them a jacket", arresting them at school, shuttling them into the justice system, and dismissing them for their school. Many of the men expressed a lack of authentic care from their teachers because of their race in combination with low expectations. The men believed their teachers were not concerned about them after elementary school and on many occasions the school administrators did not give them the benefit of the doubt. Unnever & Gabbidon (2011) suggest, "that crime-causing forces undermine the willingness of African Americans to develop strong bonds with institutions that they believe are biased against African Americans these beliefs and prejudice cause them to be defiant or retreat into a state of hopelessness as they experience racial injustice" (p145). I argue that from the time of integration through the introduction of zero tolerance the men from Hamilton Park understood their schools as race-making places. As a result, were alienated from schools and pushed toward prison and the acceptance of a criminal identity.

Public policies impact the larger socio-political factors that contribute to the construction of the pipeline. Table 2 provides a snapshot of Texas' policies that have influenced the men from Hamilton Park path on the school to prison pipeline. In the late

1990's schools began to receive Safe Schools grants. "Safe schools" language disguised the harsh disciplinary policies or "law and order" for Texas students. Safe schools funding was used to establish police departments on school campuses and alternative education programs.

Policy reports and scholarly journals began to robustly address the school to prison pipeline phenomena in 2006-2007. The advocacy group Texas Appleseed conducted a study examining school discipline in Texas. They examined the policies that contributed to the construction of the pipeline through the perspective of the adults involved in the educational system. Interviews with school board members, teachers, and police demonstrate the range of language that impacts the production of the pipeline. In the Texas Appleseed Report (2007) according to the American Psychological Association's (APA) Zero Tolerance Task Force, zero tolerance policies are:

> Discipline policies that apply predetermined consequences, usually severe and punitive, without considering the severity of the student's behavior, the student's intent, or the situational context in which it occurred.
>
> The effectiveness of zero tolerance policies varies among students. With some kids, zero tolerance is the only way to accomplish the goal, but it is not helpful with others," a DAEP teacher said.

The language from the APA suggests zero tolerance policies are harsh, and while the policies do not explicitly point to race, the students most impacted by the policies are students of color. Educational systems have imagined that the students that need more punitive actions are students of color. The Justice Center study addresses racial disparity more directly than other large-scale reports. As a result, popular media quickly responded to the report. A 2011 article in the New York Times (*One way to guarantee more*

trouble) comments on the large-scale study conducted by the Justice Center in Texas:

> The breakdown of who was punished is also chilling. African-American students and those with some disabilities were disproportionately likely to be removed from the classroom. A staggering 83 percent of black males had at least one discretionary violation, compared with 74 percent of Hispanic males and 59 percent of white male students. Minority students were more commonly given harsher out-of-school suspensions, rather than in-school suspensions, for their first disciplinary violation.
>
> Such findings might have been dismissed in the past by those who believed that minority students were more likely to be "bad kids." National studies have shown that African-American students are no more likely than others to commit offenses that require removal.
>
> This problem is not unique to Texas. California and Florida have even higher out-of-school suspension or expulsion rates than Texas, according to the study. The Office for Civil Rights at the federal Department of Education has opened investigations into the disciplinary treatment of minority students in a dozen school districts around the country. Texas deserves praise for examining this problem squarely. It and many other states now need to find solutions.

Further an article from the Houston Chronicle (2011) Fowler and Rose stated,

> The Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG) analysis, which was able to control for factors like poverty and higher absentee rates, definitively confirms that race is a predictive factor in whether a student will be discretionarily disciplined at school. Special education students are also disciplined at higher rates than their peers. Half of Texas' students identified as emotionally disturbed were suspended or expelled 11 or more times over a six-year period.
>
> The ramifications are disastrous. Students suspended or expelled from school are more than five times more likely to repeat a grade and/or drop out. A single suspension or expulsion nearly doubles the likelihood that a student will come into contact with the juvenile justice system by the end of the next school year. At the same time, the CSG study does not address the impact of Class C misdemeanor ticketing at school, which is introducing thousands of Texas public school students to the adult justice system every year.

The Justice Center report and popular media comments that followed, mark significant progress in the discussion of disparity and disproportionality in school discipline.

However, the on the ground realities are not as clear as reports and popular media. In

Texas, a panel of state representative was convened to discuss the report and possible solutions. An African American female representative from the Juvenile Justice department suggested more programs for African American males to combat the disparate harm caused by harsh school discipline policies. A European American male State Representative quickly snapped at the woman "all students are being suspended to often." The statement signaled a silencing or avoidance of race and a willingness to accommodation White privilege. The discussion of race was not recognized until a European American female State Representative reintroduced the topic (Table 2.).

Table 2. Policy Timeline

1967 The Interim Committee on Juvenile Crime recommends improved school counseling and greater attention todropout prevention—and urges those Texas school districts prohibiting corporal punishment to reconsider that decision and "avoid the excesses of coddling." The only recommendation to become law is creating new counseling positions in schools.	1969 The State of Texas creates the Texas Education Code. Subchapter I, entitled "*Discipline; Law & Order*," allowing school districts to suspend "incorrigible" students and bring proceedings in juvenile court against students "who persistently violate the reasonable rules and regulations of the school."
1976 An interim committee report to the 65th Legislature concludesthat school "disciplinary procedures...are best handled at the local level."	1978 The Select Committee on Drug and Alcohol Abuse recommends adding alcohol and drug education programs to public school curriculum in Texas.

Table 2. Continued

1979 The Texas Education Code is amended to allow teachers to remove a pupil from the classroom "to maintain effective discipline" and to recommend suspension of any student who assaults a teacher or who "repeatedly interfere(s) with that teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the majority of students in the class." A due process hearing is required.	1980 Attorney General Mark White's office publishes a proposed "Voluntary Student Code of Conduct" for use in public schools.
1983 The National Commission on Excellence in Education releases *"A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform"* — claiming that U.S. students lag those in other nations and warning of *"a rising tide of mediocrity."* 1986 A special session of the 69th Legislature amends the Education Code to allow school boards to suspend students for up to six days without referring them to an alternative education program. The Code does not mandate suspension or expulsion for any offense—decision is left to district	1983 The reconstituted Select Committee on Public Education headed by H. Ross Perot begins to examine "every aspect of the public education system"—ultimately recommending state-funded alternative schools and Texas Education Agency approval of discipline management 1992 The State Board of Education begins to call for zero tolerance policies to prevent school violence and drug abuse, a shift rooted in the stateand national "war on drugs" campaigns of the 1980s and the passage of the federal Gun Free School Zones Act in 1990.

Table 2. Continued

1995	1996-2007
In his State of the State address to the 74th Legislature, Governor George W. Bush notes: *"We must adopt one policy for those who terrorize teachers or disrupt classrooms—zero tolerance."* The 74th Legislature rewrites the Texas Education Code to include Chapter 37—creating Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs (JJAEPs), listing the offenses that trigger mandatory referrals to these programs, and giving school districts discretion to refer students for other Code of Conduct violations. In its 1995 Long-range Plan for Public Education, the State Board of Education includes: "Promote zero-tolerance guidelines for behaviors and actions that threaten school safety."	The Texas Education Code, Chapter 37, Discipline; Law & Order, is amended almost every legislative session in this period. In 2007, state lawmakers pass legislation requiring the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop minimum standards for DAEPs, but stop short of requiring TEA to monitor or implement those standards.

Note: Adapted from Texas Appleseed (2007) Texas' school to prison pipeline: dropout to incarceration the impact of zero tolerance polices

The Game is Sold Not Told

In some ways the formerly incarcerated men of Hamilton Park were reluctant to disclose information regarding "the game." Keith (40) said, "the game is supposed to be sold not told, but I am going to give it to you this way." In this statement it was clear he wanted me to understand that I was receiving this information because I was his homegirl- an insider. It further communicated that I was a researcher- an outsider that he desired to inform. "The game" has a variety of levels. In many cases the game is the drug trade, but in some cases it is any illegal activity that has them wedded to the streets. Entry into "the game" started during their adolescent years- late junior high and early high

school when they believed school was not a place for them. I had not expected to hear such a variety of stories regarding drug use and drug dealing. The participants in all of the generations spoke of the different types of drug exposure that occurred when they transitioned to the predominately European American schools. Their drug behaviors and involvement in the drug trade impacted levels of involvement in the "streets." James (59) explained how his first exposure to drugs happened during integration. He stated,

> At that time it wasn't apparent to me…my introduction to drugs was at Richardson High School. Subsequently, I discovered there were people who had controlled substances and they were using them-selling them...subsequently of that… I don't know if integration hummm…caused there to be more drug trafficking in Hamilton Park or not. But that is when I became aware of it. I know that my personal exposure came through the Caucasian high school students at school. I saw Caucasian students out on the parking lot smoking...that was new to me. I was introduced to what we called then downers and uppers I don't know what the drugs were...we called them yellow jackets and reds. I was also exposed to what was acid.. I'm thinking what is possible these are what amphetamines are today, but there were hallucinogenic type drugs we were introduced to those. This begin to happen in the 10th grade when we integrated...
>
> Well some of my friends and even at that time I would drive to school sometime we would begin to drive to school because unlike Hamilton Park everybody could walk to school we would either need to be bused or drive. So either I drove or was riding with one of my friends. I recall in the parking lot smelling marijuana I think it was in the parking lot of Richardson high school it is not clear who was with me, but we were talking to some of the students Caucasian students...that was my first memory of exchanging money for marijuana and smoking it. From that point I was introduced to other drugs. People who were hummm doing what these people did there were no friendship there...it was us and them. We were not all socializing my memory of the exchanges were that of exchanging money for drugs

Barry (61) described how European American students had better drugs he said,

> I mean, I mean just, out here, dudes just drinking beer and weed they wasn't into acid and drinking syrup. But one thang that weed was always…it was better. Yeah, I mean it might have been grown better cause it was always…I mean you could smell it.

Carl (60) discussed drugs more nonchalantly. He described the use of cocaine as no big deal but later admitted its influence on criminal activity,

> I didn't give a fuck about drugs back then I was doing cocaine...yes, the drugs impacted us cause we started slipping mommy. We had we had just…shit…we had dope from here to that TV and we were still robbing we had a female named Janet Brown we grew up with. She was running this muthafucka' she was telling us who to get. We had dope from here to the fucking curb, but we got greedy cause we had fucking babies. We got busted we did some stupid shit we did a…got damn…gas station among other shit.

Timothy (24) stated,

> At 15 I am hustling…I used to sell weed pills-bars hydrocodone-I still had people from the school-I still do it not as much because I have a job and I am getting back in school…I wouldn't live this life if I didn't have to but I make ends meet. You said just selling drugs…I don't choose that route just think about it some people get paid weekly bi weekly and some jobs you may not get paid for two months because of how things fall so to make money I mean you got a chance to make some money…you gone take it right. I mean so some people live check by check you can't make it weekly or biweekly. (On getting started) I saw someone else do it. I saw him so it was good before because we didn't have police in the neighborhood…I could walk down the block with pound of weed in my backpack. No problem…you could ride around with pounds. That was 2007…shit done got crazy I wouldn't dare walk around this bitch with drugs

Scott (36) stated,

> Selling drugs looking at what other people had thinking I could get that. I just start selling I was 16-17 years old. (On making money) No, because if you're not taught you get burnt till you learn on your own-I got burnt a lot. Then I learned on my own to make my little money-back in the day as we call it we were just clothes and tennis shoe hustlin'. We didn't have bills to pay or anything like that we didn't know anything about bills we were riding around in cars and we were buying cars for cash…silence…I really did live that lifestyle for minute until I got caught up.

Frank (27) stated,

> Too many drugs just wilding out being where the attention was most at-that was on me. Cause that is where I was so if it was someumin' with drama wise. I was just on to many drugs…bars…four bars…you know what your doing but you don't know what you are doing. Pills …Xanax…that was one of my main problems bars and syrup.

Steven (34) stated,

> Yes! I sold drugs at school…they (white people) do a lot a drugs. When I came out side of my house everyday I could make more going outside I could make more money just walking outside so why should I go to school and make what you make in a week in a day in one day. 1993...the school kids were buying weed and pills and powder they were on party drugs. At home you sold the harsher drugs depressants crack, syrup, four bars, wack, kush.

Andrew (46) stated,

> But the girl got me on dope cause I had a little money to buy it and that was it like hey you got money to buy it and I was like hey I didn't want to do that stuff. But I went through about 60,000 dollars and I lost about 60 lbs. in 6 months. Yep, I was real skinny I got real, real thin and my Dad got on my case and told me that I needed to leave the dope alone and that my attitude was real bad. Yeah, I was doing cocaine. I was freebasing, smoking, smoking dope. I had a $400 a day habit.

Keith (40)

> I didn't like school no more I had a taste of the streets. I felt like I was wasting my time being at the school house so let me go get this money…that was my addiction. I didn't smoke cigarettes. I didn't drink beer didn't like the taste of it. A guy that my sister was dating hip me to the game. He told me hold 'bout 50 pieces…you do the math…whoa…$2500…say what…man show me how to do this. I took everything that came along with it…everybody think the drug trade about making the money, but it is not. The jackers and the police come with it. I had to learn that-thieves at your door and the police. The money come in everyday-it sell itself if you got it people want it…see I can't really explain it to you…the game suppose to be sold not told.

McCall (41) stated,

> I say it is worse if you are dealing than if you are using. It is addictive either way you get addicted to using the same way you get addicted to the lifestyle…the money. It is still an addiction the same way it is for the user it crushed a lot of peoples' dreams, peoples' advancements. You had athletes, lawyers, everything they didn't get a chance for that to happen because of drug dealing or using.

In the case of each of the twelve formerly incarcerated African American men a discernable story tracks their path from elementary school joy, to middle or high school conflict, to incarceration. Moreover, the stories of each have strikingly similar features. In a matter of fact way and with specific examples, they describe the ways they were negatively labeled, assumed deviant or criminal, and treated accordingly. As apparently

prejudice teachers and administrators pigeonholed them the consequences were disastrous. School discipline policy documents further supported and cemented their new identities as criminal.

Whereas chapter four told the story of the community that brought so much joy to their lives, chapter fives captured the stories of twelve African American men as they moved from school into the prison pipeline. In most cases disciplinary policies labeled them and made future punishment and eventual incarceration more likely. Experiences and perception of mistreatment, and the new experience of being racialized, seen and treated as "bad boys" (Ferguson, 2001) alienated them from schools and hastened their departure from school and entry into the justice system. Further, chapter five told the story of a school to prison pipeline that was constructed during integration and was heightened by increased surveillance and punishment as zero tolerance policies became public school reality and hastened the path to incarceration. Chapter 5 also showed individual and community attempts to resist involvement with drugs that had begun to pour into the community. The men had varied and connected ideas regarding drug dealing and drug use in the community. However, each of the men in the pipeline ended up with some level of involvement in the drug trade.

When men are pushed out of school and enter the streets, their lives are forever changed. Most are incarcerated or shot, and sometimes both happen because that is the nature of the game. The entire community, not just their immediate family, feels the impact. Parents, wives, and children, as well as economical and social structures of the community are all altered. Single mothers or grandparents who may not have the

financial or emotional resources to provide for them in meaningful ways are raising children. Further, when men are returned to the community after years of incarceration their transitions are difficult and their ability to maintain gainful employment is severely comprised. Chapter 6 illuminates how formerly incarcerated men of Hamilton Park continue to struggle with being on paper and how it impacts their lives.

Chapter 6: Coming Home

The school to prison pipeline does not stop when the student is securely ensconced in the justice system. The formerly incarcerated men from Hamilton Park have served their prison time and returned to the community. However, re-entry is a set of complex transitions of returning home, reuniting with family, returning to school, and securing employment. All of the men described changes in themselves after they were institutionalized; no one returns home the same man. Keith (40) explained that when men get out of prison, they try to find their place in the community, but doing so is not always a simple or straightforward process.

> Most people go back (to prison) cause they try to catch up when they get back. It is like Double Dutch. Jumping rope, the rope is already going you gotta' time it. You can't catch up. When you try to catch up they beat your legs up with that jump rope cause you didn't time it right. You didn't jump in when you were suppose to; try to rush it and got your legs hit. My terminology you ain't gone hear from another person cause I analyze it and look at thangs. I choose my words wisely to make a person understand. You are a girl that is why I use Double Dutch. You can't catch up; you gotta' catch in and sometime it ain't meant for you to get back on at the point where you were.

These men navigate a variety of transitions when they return to the community. Not only are they different, so are their home communities. Many of them remembered feeling afraid because the city was different and neighborhoods they thought they knew looked completely different. Blake (42) described how he felt when he returned home:

> The joy of most of my freedom, but my youth all my 20's all my 30's. I came home at the end of my 30's…39. I lost all that. It's a big blank in my mind right now cause I don't know what happened when someone says what happened to you when…I say I was over in the penitentiary and that kind of hurt me for a long time. It still gets me down sometimes, but all the memories that I ain't made good memories free memories. All I can think back is when I was locked up and that ain't and uh…after a little stress and depression I finally figured out what I wanted to do and that was get my education. I got out-I was 39 so I went from a

> boy to a man inside a fence. And you know I'm still trying to catch up I ain't gonna lie.
>
> Coming home…that's like culture shock. You have been in one type of environment for so long. And you come back, when I came home my mother picked me up from downtown. I was like man; where am I? When I was on the bus coming back I looked around and I didn't recognize nothing. And, uh, it's a lot of things I still don't recognize I can barely drive without getting lost. It's a hard thang. It was kind of scary. You know I was scared because I didn't know what to expect.

Catching up is a difficult process, the years in prison cannot be recovered, and all the men I interviewed described a wide gap between themselves and their peers with and without school or work experiences. While incarcerated, an inmate is subject to arrested development in terms of developing social, emotional, coping, and work skills that others pick up in the course of their daily lives outside of prison (Dmitrieva et al., 2012). For example, if a young man is incarcerated at 17 years old and released when at 27 years old, he is still 17 years old in terms of experiences outside of prison. However, individuals and institutions expect him to navigate the free world as a 27 year old. James (59) remembered how he felt behind when he returned home from prison because his peers had gone to college and established careers. His friends owned homes or in other ways moved forward in ways that had been impossible for him.

Some of the men have spent so much time in penal institutions that their initial transition back to the community was overwhelming; some habits of the institution remain a part of their daily lives and interactions. Even mundane aspects of daily life could be overwhelming. Conner (33) described:

> My transition out was an eye opener. Gas was high. Gas was high and I thought people was tripping cause I mean you hear about people coming in and some

> people talking to them and I lived off a few memories of things I was doing before I ran into a few people that I knew and they help you transition. When I got out I was like whoa and I had a leg monitor so I couldn't go out for like a week and a half. I didn't get to function really as well, but going in crowded places was like whoa I wasn't used to that. I'd look at people like hey what you doing. And crowded places, it just man, to be around people and they steady moving around. Being locked up you not used to that cause you walking in a line and the person is behind you. You walk with people that you know or people you mess with on a regular basis, but if somebody step out of line somebody gonna tell you this and that or what's going on.
>
> It was a transition. I'd go to places and I'd come back home and my nerves…it was kind of just too much for me at one time. Yeah, it was too much cause your head is steady on swivel it was bad because my Auntie was like why are you steady looking. Cause of all these people…I mean it was a mess. She was like it was only a little girl. (laughter) It don't matter. Somebody could be walking and I'm steady walking behind or I stop and let them go by that time I was like hell I just ain't gonna go to the store. I tell you what I need and you get it 'til I'm ready for it. I just couldn't do it. It just after so long you are locked up its not being institutionalized a lot of people would say that, but its just being aware of your surroundings cause things can happen. Things get too quiet you know some things happening…it's just like that. Like at night I used to try and sleep, if it was to quiet, I'm like "man what's going on?" My aunt used to wonder why I got the T.V. up loud. In prison, when its quiet the next morning means something going to go on the next day or whatever some things going to go on. It's not going to be a good outcome. I just function like that after nine years of being in that surrounding. It's kind of hard. Most people say within six months people go back and that's a lie. Cause I ain't never…well I ain't gonna say never but not intentionally I ain't never going back I can't do it.

Over and over again the men's stories indicate that they were happy to return home. Although they did not disclose all of the details of being in prison, it was consistently described as "horrible," "hell," or a place [I] "wouldn't send my worse enemy." None of the men expressed any desire to return to prison, however post-release most of them remained property of the state.

Being on Paper

Entering the school to prison pipeline has lasting effects. From a specific moment in their adolescence or before, the men are labeled as "criminal" or "felon" for the remainder

of their lives. This label has a negative impact on employment, educational opportunities, and citizenry. Many formerly incarcerated men tell stories of an inability to find work because of their felony label. They are unable to gain acceptance into many education programs because of their label and many are not allowed to vote because they remain on paper for many years. In short, while their imprisonment may have been extended yet temporary, while on paper their loss of full citizenship is often permanent. This is true whether they were incarcerated for getting into a fight, dealing drugs, or murder.

After release from prison, being "on paper" means that the men are on probation or parole. They have all signed documents that outline the conditions of their parole or probation. Under these conditions, they remain under state surveillance, are required to check in with probation and parole officers, and in some instances are required to take drug tests on a regular basis. Many of the formerly incarcerated men from Hamilton Park described their experiences of being on paper. One of the most striking stories I heard was Timothy (24):

> I am on paper for 10 years…till I am 31 years old. So all I do is try to make ends meet. You would be surprised all I do is sit up in that house and play PlayStation just chilling. I ain't saying I am antisocial, but I ain't no club person none of that I just do what I do that's all. [When asked about hustling on paper?] That's the consequences; I am ok…don't get me wrong it is always thought about it. It is how you do it. There are only certain people you can do it to if you need the money you do it and you can generate the money you need and not get in trouble that fast. It has to be one of those long nights but it ain't that much activity going around somebody call you could go over and make that as far as going all the way out there fuck that shit.
>
> But I got a couple things that cost money. I can go back and get my licenses (driver's license). Yeah they suspended it I didn't even know they had done that. I got a call like last month like if you took the class you can get it…it cost like $180. If I take some class…something to get me out of my mutha'fuckin' money. I got a drug offense so I got to go to those classes.

Timothy's probation status impacts his ability to secure stable employment and as a result he participates in the game to "generate the money you need." He owes to the state for restitution and is required to take and pay for drug classes. A web of obligations keeps him tied and indebted to the state physically and financially. Carl (60) succinctly explained the notion of being a felon and being on paper, "I was sentenced to 45 years, I was in prison the 1st time for 10 years. I am still serving; I will never get off this." Many of the men are impacted by their status as a felon and the reality of being on paper for the remainder of their lives. James (59) who has been out of prison since 1981 offered that:

> There were phases if I remember correctly; it was 10 years I reported for a while for a number of years. After that I would write a letter that disclosed where I lived and worked, but it was a long time that I had to do that…many years.
>
> It made a difference; it continues to make a difference there were and are jobs I can't get cause I'm a felon. I remember some years ago there was a position in the school system helping kids at risk that I thought I would be perfect for. I knew what these kids were going through. On my application I disclosed my felony, but they hired me and then I guess the paperwork was slow and they found out I had a felony and they let me go. At that time I had been out of prison a very long time.
>
> A year ago I got a letter from a jail in the community for a crisis counselor. I told the truth (about felony) I think I would have gotten the position had it not been for that (the felony). I got an interview; during the interview process I was in the jail like really in the jail. He took me into the section were the men were it made me think…that is you years ago. I felt so grateful to be where I was-it was about that one moment being in jail being in the place where the excuse my language…MFs would snatch your neck off. I didn't get the job…sometimes doors are closed in my face, but I was grateful for that moment.

In many ways James is the perfect picture of rehabilitation. He has never been re-arrested or returned to prison. He has received a master of counseling degree and has maintained stable employment. Nevertheless, he said there were many doors closed because of his incarceration at the age of seventeen. Ironically, some positions he was disqualified from are those where he could have a great impact in disrupting the school to prison pipeline. At almost sixty years old James continues to pay for a crime he committed when he was 17 years old. Being on paper often includes drug testing or other forms of monitoring and the ability to move freely. Many men described how they eventually went back into the game because they were unable to find stable employment. They also believed that race was integral in their inability to find work. After receiving some level of education from GEDs to college degrees the men continued to struggle with the felony label.

Frank (27) stated,

> I was home doing what I was suppose to be doing I was smoking, but I was taking my UAs and passing. I was taking clean pills…when I first got out hard at first cause I didn't have nothing…first couple of months after that I eventually started back selling dope it came up real quick. I did what I had to do.

Conner (33) stated,

> I do this until I just I can find what I need to and finish doing what I need to. I done had other good jobs in and out, but for you being a felon they can just pay you minimum wage and I know my skills and I know my worth. I know you gotta' start somewhere, but I ain't gonna start from pennies. You know hey you might not give me the complete $10 but I know I'm worth it. You can put me at $8.50 or something like that but you ain't gonna put down to minimum wage. I got skills. I got out of prison I was not even out a month and I got a job. I started at McDonalds to have a job to start somewhere to have something to put down on a resume because you been gone nine years you've got that empty space on there your job history so I went from there to working at a gas station.

McCall (41) stated,

> I got a daughter and child support. Maybe something will happen but time is running out. I went on 30 job sights cause I had to, but not one person was calling me back, not one. I went to this place like in east Dallas like for people who just get out of jail with felony records and shit they did not hire me. I was like what the fuck. Damn you know a lot people don't think this but it is racism…man it is racism. And then once you tell them how old you are and you ain't had no job since 1999 they are "like damn why you ain't had no job since 1999." I am sleeping in the bed I made it could have been different whose to say it couldn't have been different. If I had did things different it would have been different it would be a whole lot better than it is now.

Barry (60) wanted me understand that most of the men he knew were smart, but getting caught in the criminal justice system changed their possibilities:

> I'm doing different things, but I don't want you to think that cause we went to prison that we dumb. Cause I even got a whole bunch when I was in prison I studied the bible and got a whole bunch of certificates. I went in there thinking about what I done. You got a felony…that's one thing wrong with the system now. They got a whole bunch of dudes that just got caught with some weed or something and they exclude them from the corporate world…you got a felony.

Carl (60) said the sentencing practices are ridiculous. He described a system that men could not recover from if they were ever released. He stated:

> There were some long sentences you find out such and such is locked up and that boy got 85 aggravated years. When I went in they were giving away so much time. Hank Brown got 1000 years. The Money Boys got 800 years a piece. Some people were getting 3 life sentences. David Sanders got 454 years. One dude got 99 years and one dark day. The judges were just fuckin' with and fuckin' over people.

During my research, it was rumored that a 26 years old man in the community was charged under the Adam Walsh Child protection and Safety Act. This act is widely known as a statute that targets sexual offenders. However, a community resident claimed that this was used to charge this young man who was involved in the drug trade, because

he had a 17 year old that worked for him. This charge, along with drug charges, carries harsh mandatory sentences.

Todd (34) discussed the realities of men who are on paper that return to prison over and over again. Often they return not because of a crime, but because of a parole or probation violation, like others, he also talked about the difficulty of gaining employment:

> They go back and forth cause they know they gonna be getting out. Cause they go in for B.S. not crime, but the one time I went in that was enough. I was probably about 20 years old well let me see 17 years old when I went in and then I was 23 years old because of four years of probation. I caught them dope cases. They (the cases) were about 15 years old, but you still can't get no job. Yeah, you still can't get no job even after 15 years. They don't want no felonies they don't care if they are old or whatever. Yeah, still today when I go apply I couldn't even get one at Taco Cabana. I said they 15 years old and they said nope even in a fast food restaurant.

In the midst of despair, the men still talk about hope and possibilities. They all understand their circumstances, but continue to want and work for more in their lives. Timothy (24) stated, "I will succeed. Being on paper won't stop me I ain't got into no trouble in three years. I plan to keep it like that I check in and everything." Blake (42) who spent the most consecutive years in prison said,

> Finally, realizing I am somebody. Not letting I am a convict slow me down like it had for a little while it did for a little while, but I finally overcame that. I'm doing what I got to do now."

Some of the men enrolled in various vocational programs,

> I just recently start going to truck driving school you know. You have your ups and downs finding jobs because being a felon…like you have assaulted a police officer it was hard for me to find a job. I didn't assault the law (police), but they got so much stipulation on these laws that if you just run past them… I didn't assault the law and they knew I

> didn't but they got me. I'm back in school that is good I had to (Scott 36).

Despite some sentiment of hope and possibility these men encounter obstacles in their daily lives. These begun in middle and high school and once they have a jacket, and then are incarcerated, and then are on paper, former felons will likely encounter obstacles until their deaths or near it. While these stories illuminate individual men's journey, their stories are often intertwined with those of their children that they are obligated to nurture and support financially, but struggle to do so because of their involvement in the justice system. In addition, the community as a whole is affected as their underemployment or unemployment and financial debts to the state means there are fewer financial resources flowing into the community.

The complexities of entering the justice system, and the mechanisms that help sustain the men's existence in the system on the back end are a huge, elaborate, and an effective trap. In Hamilton Park the school to prison pipeline includes a matrix of bias in school discipline that began during integration, includes harsher punishments for students of color, labels them as gang affiliated, escalates their punishment once in the justice system, and pushes them to dropout. A labyrinth of discriminatory sentencing guidelines, felony labels, being on paper, and being chronically underemployed and undereducated lead many men to re-engage in criminal activities after release. Without a reimagining of our systems and how they function, our schools, juvenile justice systems, and public policies leave our children in peril and destined for prison.

Over-determinism

The school to prison pipeline has been constructed not by African American and Latino students engaged in illegal activity, but through a system of bias that benefits the dominant group. African American males in particular are disproportionately more harshly disciplined in both schools and juvenile justice systems, and analogously pushed out of the educational system and securely entrenched in the justice system.

Identifiable circumstances have led to the over-representation of African American men in the school to prison pipeline. In discussing the school to prison pipeline it is useful to think in terms of spaces or conditions of over-determination. Over-determination refers to a set of conditions that undermine human agency and almost inevitably produce a certain outcome. The framework includes recognition of the continued salience of past events and the impact of current ones. Over-determinism as a framework suggests every human action is impacted by prior events (Fuller, 2008; McAfee, 2007). The stories of formerly incarcerated African American men of Hamilton Park illuminate the circumstances that collide to make incarceration a more likely outcome in the lives of African American youth. African American children have encountered racism at all levels of the educational and justice systems. Whether by design or unintended outcomes the construction of the pipeline is the combination of integration, which constituted a white take over of black schooling, and zero tolerance policies that exasperated the problem of how African American students were disciplined. This combination provided an entryway into the pipeline leading from school to prison.

In an effort to create a more perfect racial union, we used our children to try to begin to break down racial barriers. The *Brown vs. The Board of Education* decision was ideal in its attempt to provide equality for African American students in public schools. While the notion of *Brown vs. The Board of Education* is ideal, the process of creating equality was a failure (Bell, 2004). In many cases, African American students had "equal" access to books and other resources because they were in the same building with European American students. However, even when resources were equalized their experiences were and continue to be vastly different from European American students. European American teachers, administrators, who displaced African American teachers and administrators, were ill equipped to handle integration (Foster, 1997). McCall remembered that they were not told about going to school with European American students. African American students were transferred into schools that assumed them to be uneducable and dangerous. The long history of race and White racial terrorism was and continues to be ignored in our schools and replaced with a color-blind ideology that miseducates European and African American students about race in the United States and leaves them ill equipped to navigate the racial terrains set up by integration. By their disproportionate referrals for punishment and special education teachers and administrators shows that they are anything but colorblind even as so many claim it as their worldview (Marx, 2006).

During my interviews with the men they consistently described interactions with teachers and administrators that illuminated levels of racism. Over and over, I heard stories from African American men about racial profiling where students received jackets

and were assumed guilty. Conner described an instance of mistaken identity by a European American teacher, because another African American boy had on the same shirt in school. Conner was blamed for a fight that he was not involved in and punished because he argued his innocence. Blake was suspended for breaking up a fight between his friend and another student. Others have been kicked out of home schools limiting their educational possibilities. The actions of adults in the youth's exosystem contribute to their over-determination for entry into the juvenile justice system. Overdetermination is not the outcome of work by individual actors; rather African Americans actions and others reactions to them, should be understood through the lens of long history of understanding African American males as dangerous (Brown, 2008). Therefore, it is important to consider how African American males are over-determined by sociopolitical and socio-cultural factors leading them down criminal pathways. According to Althusser (2001) ideological structures and institutions such as schools, justice systems, public policies, and the media maintain power and seek to reinforce the hegemonic processes that benefit the dominant group. Therefore, the trajectory of the formerly incarcerated men from Hamilton Park in schools should be understood through this hegemonic process and the over-determinism it produces. It has taken centuries to construct a criminal justice system that targeted African American men and decades to construct schools that target African American students for the juvenile justice system, but it should not take decades to close off the school to prison pipeline.

Possibilities for Progress

In the last five years, scholars, public policy advocates, non-profit organizations, and media have brought the concept school to prison pipeline into the public discourse.

The school to prison pipeline is a complex phenomena, therefore closing it off will require a thoughtfully produced set of institutional reforms. A number of contextual interventions are necessary to realize structural transformation (Kraehe et al, 2010). One of the first areas of concerns is how we handle race in our schools. Many of the men in the study believed that they were unwanted and disposable in their school environments. These perceptions are still with us. Until educators are intentional about changing how we prepare pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and school leadership for diverse classrooms, students of color will suffer (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Howard, 2010; Pollock, 2010; Marx, 2006). Further, according to Brown & Brown (2010), our official school curriculum matters because many of the K-12 teachers are European American and have "limited experiences with communities of color" (p.33). While we assume that issues of race and racism in school discipline are isolated, they are connected to "socio-historical knowledge" (Brown & Brown, 2010) and socio-political factors. How socio-political factors are interpreted in school curriculum impacts teachers' and students' socio-historical knowledge. It is further suggested that socio-historical knowledge impacts how teachers and students understand race and racism historically in the United States, and therefore how they respond to it presently (Brown & Brown, 2010). In many ways, school curriculum treats racism as a set of individual acts rather than structural and institutional in nature. These institutions maintain subservient positions for African Americans politically, socially, and economically (Brown & Brown, 2010). In addition, schools, through the school to prison pipeline systematically exclude African American

students from the educational process and limit them economically, socially, and politically.

A superintendent in a local district near the Dallas area recognizes the damage of our current school discipline policies and alludes to the negative consequences of the school to prison pipeline. He suggests school discipline is about the administrators' over-utilization of harsh punishment.

> The data showed that suspensions are a little too easy. Once they become automatic, we've really hurt that child's chances to receive a high school diploma. We've got to find ways to keep those kids in school. Don't get me wrong — we have to provide safe environments for all the other kids. But you have to balance it out and cut down the suspensions and expulsions. (Doug Otto, superintendent of the Plano Independent School District, New York Times, 2011)

However, he refers to the students as "those kids" and keeping "all of the other students safe". Plano Independent school district demographics are 41% European American, 20% Latino and Asian, and 11% African American; his language is heavily coded because "those kids" are the African American students that make up 35% of school district's suspensions (Texas Appleseed, 2009). This racial avoidance at the highest levels of school administration demonstrates the need for intentional systemic change. Instead of focusing energy on punishment and control of African American students schools need to focus on how to educate and support students. This can be accomplished through more mediation, parent-teacher conferences, and mental health counseling. Alternatives to harsh discipline are beginning to emerge. The Waco independent school district is beginning to see results from their positive policing initiative. The program provides training to police officers and administrators to respond to students as students rather than

as criminals. The district has experienced dramatic reduction in school suspensions and expulsions. Further, schools around the nation are beginning to introduce System-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBS) - a systemic approach to improve school environments (SWPBS, 2009). It focuses on changing underlying attitudes and policies regarding how behavior is addressed. SWBPS has three different levels of school-wide intervention; the program is designed to shift the focus away from the individual student and focus on the primary problems such as school structures and educator behaviors. These types of contextual solution have the potential to lead to structural transformations.

Along with pre-service and in-service teacher training, curricular reforms, and school-wide positive behavior intervention supports, raising public awareness and awareness in government bodies is another intervention that is a part of dissembling the school to prison pipeline. In March 2010, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan made a speech that illuminated the disproportionality in school discipline. He urged for more civil rights enforcement. Further, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Fund (NAACP) testified at the hearing on "Ending the School to Prison Pipeline" in December 2012 at United States Senate Committee on the judiciary subcommittee on the constitution, civil rights, and human rights. Their testimony highlighted the disparity in treatment among African American students and urged for a dismantling of the pipeline and recommend federal legislation to support this effort. However, Secretary Duncan's office is responsible for the enforcement he urged. The Department of Education and Office of Civil Rights that is responsible for the civil

rights enforcement he calls for could implement structural reforms. Federal legislation has the potential to create structural interventions that lead to structural transformations.

A combination of contextual and structural interventions have the potential to lead to structural transformations that change how institutions function. More equitable transformations are necessary in both the educational and justice systems to prevent more African American children from being trapped in the school to prison pipeline. While, the problem of the pipeline is a structural and systemic problem and does not rest in the individual, the pipeline has impacted young and senior men, the people they know, and the communities in which they live. Therefore, community interventions are imperative as well. Many individuals programs have proven effective at supporting students of all backgrounds and African American male students in particular. However, there are only a few organizations that provide a myriad of services for students in the school to prison pipeline, and even fewer that serve both youth in the justice system and adults after release. Interventions for schools, parents, pre-adjudicated and post-adjudicated students, and formerly incarcerated men and women should not be a one size fits all package program, but instead it meet the needs of the school, parent, students, and formerly incarcerated depending on mutually identified needs. A program may include some of the recommendations below:

Critical Cultural Consciousness Building

1) School Intervention-Year long courses for pre-service teachers and training for in-service teachers and administrators that explore issues of race and racism. Long-term

interventions are necessary to help educators examine difficult issues such as racial construction, racial identity, and the institutional nature of racial issues that have been silenced and misrepresented in educational institutions (Pollock, 2004 & 2010; Brown & Brown, 2010) and require long-term training versus one-day cultural diversity training. The formerly incarcerated men of Hamilton Park described racial misunderstandings, inconsistent discipline, and miseducation because faculty and staff did not know how to support and educate African American students. The trainings will provide a safe space that helps faculty and staff understand how to avoid stereotyping, active versus passive racism and tools to change the structure of classrooms and schools. 2) District Intervention-On-going interventions and support for district administrators regarding issues of race and racism as it relates to policy and leadership. The trainings would assist administrators in understanding current policies and implications for students of color. The training would also address the need for critically cultural consciousness leadership that guides the district to more equitable discipline solutions for students of color. The leadership training would also help administrators explore new educational pathways for students that have been disciplined. 3) Educational opportunities for students who have been traditionally over labeled and over disciplined. Initiatives could include college awareness and readiness for students-dual credit programs that provide college and high school credits for youth in alternative and juvenile justice schools.

Building Community

The Hamilton Park community had a tangible impact on the formerly incarcerated

African American men. In the early years of Hamilton Park, the school and the community were one institution. The parents, teachers, and administrators all lived in the community. These social bonds gave cultural, symbolic, resistance, and navigation capital to the students (Yosso, 2005; Bourdieu et al., 1997) these forms of capital had a positive impact. As Wilson (1998) noted, a majority of students from Hamilton Park prior to integration were academically successful in high school and college. The students and parents credit the relationship between the school and the community. Today, very few teachers live in the communities where they teach and have had very little contact with people of color (Brown & Brown 2010).

Community School Intervention- Community mentors for students, teachers, and administrators-mentors would be carefully chosen to the meet the needs of the mentee and mentor. Students may be paired with other high school students, university students, or community members that can support their academic and social needs. Teachers and administrators will be paired with critically cultural conscious teachers or community members to develop their connection to communities of color. Administrators may also be paired with community leaders or administrators that support their leadership and policy needs.

Family Support

Parents are tasked with helping their children navigate the educational system. In some cases parents must navigate the school and justice systems. In my experience with juvenile offenders parents have said they are often treated like criminals when their

children misbehave at school or become involved in criminal activity. Families need support in many different ways. These interventions can provide the support families need. 1) Parent Training that help them navigate the educational system-the training would help parents understand the hidden expectations of teachers and administrators. 2) Parental support groups-a coalition of parents that partners to check in with students at school and volunteer during school activities. 3) Support groups for children to deal with stigma, loss, etc. of a parent that is currently or formerly incarcerated. Mental health services support, educational and extracurricular activities to support them in school. Also, community mentors for the children of incarcerated parents to further support their aspirations.

Re-Entry Support

The formerly incarcerated men of Hamilton Park identified a numbers needs after they were released from prison. The following outlines some of the potential interventions that could improve their return to the community. 1) Transitional and reentry support that includes mental health services, substance abuse services, basic needs services such as securing housing, food, identification. 2) Community mentors-pairing formerly incarcerated men with a community mentor would be based on the needs of both the mentee and mentor. Mentors may include undergraduate and graduate students, professionals in their field formerly incarcerated and not. 3) Educational opportunities to assist in developing their interests and determine best pathways to educational achievement. Assistance with financial aid and transition into college

environment would be provided. 4) Staffing and employment training and assistance- many of the men described being underemployed and unemployed and how those gaps hindered their ability to gain employment. As an extension to their additional education assistance the employment training would help with building a resume, developing interview skills and training in understanding corporate or other work environments. A supportive and nurturing environment for formerly incarcerated men has the potential to change the community locally and nationally. Timothy (24) expressed a need and a desire to build such a space:

> If I could change anything…that is kinda powerful…huh…maybe…do something for others with the neighborhood with my self also just be a little different. Just be more educated I tell you this little dude his mom died of cancer his eyes were glazed I knew he was blazed and I was telling him while you are standing on these corners you need to do something…you know help little niggas get more educated and get out of this game.

Conner (33) also said,

> I probably would have to tell people what I would have been through and if I hadn't messed with the streets. I mean, I would say its not all what it's worked up to be and say I should have chosen another way, but the only thing you can do is correct it on the down. Do what you got to do to make it not happen to somebody else and better yourself at the same time. You know even though I'm still doing this and that (in the game) I would still tell them you don't want to do this you don't want to have to function like this. Say its education it plays a big strong role. You know, so I mean education I ain't gonna lie I was going to be a pharmacist too (like Auntie).

Educational possibilities have the potential to change the lives of formerly incarcerated men. Education reduces recidivism (Steurer & Smith, 2003) and as a result has the

potential to create stronger schools and healthier communities. Contrary to popular thought, formerly incarcerated African American men have resources to offer the community if they are given the necessary education and support. They have the power to prevent other young African American men from traveling the same path. Their stories have the potential to change the young men in their immediate community and the larger community.

Stories as Healing

One day in the process of writing this chapter, a dear friend shared her perspective that, "if you heal a woman you have the potential to heal a community." My father had a more profound impact on me as an adult than when I was a child. When I recall my childhood, I have memories of what seemed to be a regular middle class experience. It was the adult recognition of his absence that profoundly impacted my work as an emerging scholar. Through this journey of hearing the stories of formerly incarcerated men from Hamilton Park I have come to better understand my father's story and by extension my own. I have healed, I have forgiven, and I have been blessed with the opportunity to give others permission to do the same. During the second and third interviews with some of the men they said they had found new strength to contact daughters, ex-wives, ex-girlfriends, and parents and ask them to forgive them. Further, they began to take a closer look at their lives. Some have considered returning to school. I look forward to not only sharing this work with them but also following up and supporting their aspirations. My father James (59) said, that my work not only impacted him personally, but professionally. His counseling practice had focused primarily on marriage and family, but now he has developed a counseling program for young African

American males currently involved in the juvenile justice system and for those in jeopardy of being involved in the system. James was not the only person who told me they had been impacted by telling their story. Carl (60) said:

> A lot of things came back when I talked to you the last time. I had forgotten about stuff, maybe intentionally. Seeing you and remembering when you and Donna were babies it kinda' fucked me up. I been taught in the streets and the penitentiary never let anyone see you cry, that is a sign of weakness. I don't know what it was, maybe y'all were my comfort zone, but I look at y'all and my eyes started watering. I couldn't apologize to y'all enough because everybody has a choice and I left college to come do what I was doing you know what I mean. I came home to get all that time (in prison) as a matter of fact I came home to see Donna too. I am looking at y'all like yeah I am in college, but I have a wife and baby I gotta figure out a way. True enough my family always stood behind me my father, everybody, my wife's mother and father, but I was always taught a real man can't be a man unless he takes care of his family. I had to figure out a way and that was the only thing I could come up with. It could have been different.

Many of the men also encouraged me to finish school, and expressed pride in my work and said this work was not just for me. Barry (60) stated:

> Now in schools White folks are used to their kids in school with Blacks cause they grew up with them. They should have done a study like you a long time ago on how it affects Blacks. Some Blacks was saying that the White schools were better funded more material and they did it (integration) for Blacks to get better school they say but it still it still affected most Blacks in bad ways. You understand that. You doing the right getting your doctorate and with your son…it definitely do matter and you are very wise to see that you know he is getting disinterested in school that's what was the first thang for me cause I used to always love you know teachers and school stuff but that other stuff you know the Black/White stuff. When something happens that could very well have a dramatic affect on his (my son) life you know, you are very wise to try and figure out what's wrong and what's causing problems because you know a lot of Black troubles and hardship are from getting alienated with the way society is you got to be educated you got to know and have some degrees to show so just watch over him

Not all of the stories of healing were happy, some were sobering like in the case of Conner (33) who stated,

> That experience it helped me and then it saved me in a way cause I ain't dead. You know a lot of things like I was telling you I was trying to step away from a lot of things people I dealt with a lot of people outside of the neighborhood even though I came back here and did what I did it. A group of seven or eight including myself- it was like out of the eight of us five of us are dead and they died within months of me being locked up. We used to hang and then they got killed; we all used to go into this place you know or these places. I'm glad I was locked up cause it you would have been right there in the middle of it and probably dead. It was like that and I hate to think of it like that but it was true cause like me knowing that if I didn't get shot or something at that particular time me being loyal to who I dealt with I would have went back out there and did something crazy. It saved my life in a major way and me going through those experiences being locked up. I came home and tell a lot of people I straightened up. I don't want somebody way younger coming and telling me they want to his and that (in the game) There is no good way you get locked up I say you can't do small thangs like go the refrigerator when you want to and this ain't the way to live. And prison…it's a shocking situation and it strips a man or a woman of your pride. Being stripped of your pride is something you don't want to be stripped of. They strip it every day constantly from the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep.

Maya Angelou says, "When you know better you do better." I have been profoundly impacted by the men of Hamilton Park; they have given me their stories and in doing so have helped generate insights about how to dismantle the school to prison pipeline. For my part, I have laid the groundwork for a community organization to combat school to prison pipeline issues and post release issues. My goal is to undo generations of underachievement academically, economically, and socially for African American men and their families.

These stories have the potential to heal our nation. While my research focused on the formerly incarcerated men of Hamilton Park, the school to prison pipeline and mass incarceration disproportionately impacts African American boys and men across the nation. These stories disrupt the national discourse about African American males and the school to prison pipeline. Our current national discourse suggests that African American males involved in the criminal justice system are from poor urban schools, single parent homes, as being from unstable communities and are more badly behaved than their peers. In contrast, the men from Hamilton Park were all in resource rich affluent schools, many from two parent homes, as described by the men and residents, Hamilton Park was a very nurturing community, yet the construction of African American boys as more badly behaved is a product of over-determination through multiple systems of biases. The voices of formerly incarcerated African American males are rarely utilized in scholarly work. This is the first study to my knowledge that listens to generations of formerly incarcerated African American men and uses their voices, insights, and experiences to help build an understanding of the school to prison pipeline. Further, how it funnels African American men into the criminal justice system and how the criminal justice system maintains them even after they are no longer incarcerated.

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Appendix A

Preliminary Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol 1

Explain my research. The purpose of this interview is to understand your life history. I am pursuing a PhD in education with your permission I would like to record your story. Your interview will remain confidential I will be the only person listening to the recording. At anytime if you feel uncomfortable and want me to stop recording just say the word.

Will you tell me about your earliest childhood memories?
Probes: Where were you born? Are you the oldest, middle, youngest or only child? What are your happiest memories from childhood? Were there moments of sadness in your childhood? Will you describe those moments?

Will you please tell me about your mother and father or other family members or friends that lived in your home during your childhood?
How would describe your early relationship with your parents?

Will you please tell me about your neighborhood?
Probes: Was there anything that made your neighborhood special? How would describe the people in the community economically (working-class, middle class, etc)? Was there significance in where it was located in the city?

Let's talk about your schooling. How would you describe your early schooling? (secondary)?
Probes: Did you enjoy school when you were child? Do you have memories about school that stand out? How would describe your academic progress? Would you consider yourself a good student?

Will you describe an experience in your middle and high school schooling that you felt was important?
Probe: Do you think it changed you in any way?

How would you describe your teenage years/teenage experiences?
Probes: Were you a party person, shy, athlete? Describe any influence your friends had on your risky behavior. Describe any school influences. Parental influences, neighborhood.

Interview Protocol 2

Will you describe why you committed a crime?

Please describe how you felt when you realized you were going to prison. When you were initially incarcerated what did you worry about most? What was your sentence? How would describe your time in prison?
Probes: Will you describe the schooling you received in prison? How did you spend your time while you were incarcerated? What did you want or miss most? What was the hardest thing to handle or deal with being locked in a secure facility?

Describe what you lost and gained during incarceration.

How did you feel when you were released? How did your life change or remain the same? How did you change or remain the same

What were the first things you wanted to do when you re-entered the community?
Probes: Did you have particular goals upon release? Did you follow through? Did your goals change?

Will you describe any resources you had to help your transition back into the community? Probes: Were there things you needed but didn't have access. Were there people important to the transition?

I know that you have never gone back to prison. What do you think impacted your recidivism?

VITA

Courtney Sherman Robinson attended Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. In the fall of 1990 she entered Howard University in Washington, DC. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Howard University in 1994. During the following years, she was employed as the dean of a local community college in California. In 1999, she moved to Austin, TX and worked as Executive Director for two local non-profits. In August of 2002 she entered the graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin. She received her Master of Education degree in 2005.

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This manuscript was typed by the author.